

SERMONS,

BY

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OF

CLARE-HALL,

CAMBRIDGE.

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P R E F A C E.

AT a period when the eloquence of the pulpit seems particularly to be studied, it may be regarded as presumption in the Author to swell that copious stream of Divinity with which the press overflows; especially as, with unaffected diffidence, he declares his consciousness of insufficiency to meet the notice which he solicits; and his sense of the uncommon and superior merit of some modern publications of a description similar to his own.—To the charge of *presumption* he wishes that he could give a full and satisfactory answer. But from the plain matter of fact, he hopes for the extenuation of his *errors* as a *writer*, if not for the exculpation of his *rashness* as a *publisher*.

The Sermons now offered to the Public were preached *principally* in the year 1785—some at Cambridge—but the greater number at Titchfield-chapel, in the
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parish of Marybone.—From the pulpit they were received with favour;—and some friends of the Author, on whose judgment, when uninfluenced by partiality, he could with confidence rely, suggesting, that from the novelty of their structure they might be acceptable to *some*; and, from their enforcement of religious truth, beneficial to *others*, solicited for their publication. The Author, at that time in a situation favourable to literary pursuits, acceded, possibly with too much facility, to the measure: and revising a *few* of the discourses, sent them to the printer, so early as the last Spring. But, called by unexpected occurrences, from the leisure and convenience of an academical life, to a remote part of the island, at a distance from books, and from friends with studies and pursuits like his own, he found the prosecution of a task, into which he had stepped, too far to retreat—attended with unforeseen and considerable difficulties. The reader need not be informed, that Sermons prepared
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in a hurry, and on the emergency of occasion for the pulpit, must necessarily, to be fit for the public eye, stand in need of *careful and thorough* correction. This correction, the Author now found himself not well qualified to give;—for, in addition to the inconveniencies of his remote residence, some afflictions, of a family nature, incapacitating his mind for any *uniform and efficient* exertion, made even its *occasional* efforts feeble and slow. The Author is too well acquainted with *life*, and its *destination*, to complain of those evils which the *experienced man* knows to be inevitable, and the *Christian* feels to be advantageous. But, in the history of the present publication, it is necessary to suggest the causes of that inaccuracy, with which the Author is apprehensive that his volume may be blemished. Respecting, as he does, the competency of that tribunal before which he stands; and distrustful, as he justly is, of his own judgment and powers, he is particularly solicitous to avoid the imputation of *indolent or contemptuous negligence*.

Faulty, therefore, as his work may appear to the investigation of criticism, and greatly inadequate, as it certainly is, to his own ideas of perfection, he declares, that it is the *best* which, in his peculiar circumstances, he was able to produce—that no labour has *presumptuously* been withheld—that no imperfections have *wilfully* been overlooked, on the imaginary *superogation* of neighbouring excellencies. If the Author, therefore, should be determined to be an *indifferent writer*, it must be attributed to the defect of his abilities;—but, if an *incorrect* one, he hopes that it will be considered as an accident of his situation.

After this general apology for incorrectness, it may probably be superfluous to mention, that, of the following collection, the eighth, ninth, eleventh and twelfth Discourses, were demanded by the press before the Author could overlook them; and that, accordingly, they venture into public as they were first written, in their state of unrevised imperfection. But, *originally composed* with more
care

care than the rest, it is hoped that they will not be discovered to be *particularly* defective. Of those Sermons which have undergone any revision, the *fourth* and *fifth* seem to the Author to be the most accountable for inaccuracy. He thinks, however, that the reader will not, *upon the whole*, judge *them* to be the worst in the volume.

Of the typographical errors, which are neither few nor inconsiderable, the distant residence of the Author from the metropolis will give the adequate cause. These errors are sometimes of a provoking kind, and not unfrequently vitiate the propriety of the language, as well as interrupt the modulation of the period. Where the reader suspects any error of this species, he is requested to consult the table of errata, in which he will probably find the blunder acknowledged and rectified.—Of incorrectness in the pointing, it may be proper to remark, that, in consequence of the liberty in which the printer has indulged, of substituting his own punctuation for the Author's, it is generally and

remarkably prevalent through the volume. The reader is, therefore, requested to forgive it; and, if it should sometimes disorder the sense, by his own sagacity to correct it.

When the Author embraced the resolution of publishing, it was his design to open his work with an Essay on the *Composition of a Sermon*; and, after examining the different excellence of preaching, in the former and the present age, in other countries, as well as his own, to submit to the public judgment his opinions on a subject, which has not, as he conceives, yet received that full attention which it merits. But, from the circumstances to which he has before alluded, he finds himself under the necessity of relinquishing this extensive part of his plan, and of confining himself to a short apology for the peculiarities in *language, arrangement, and matter* of his own discourses.

If the Author's endeavours have not been unsuccessful, his *language* is unequal, and varied with his subject—sometimes plain and quiet—and sometimes hurried
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and raised with imagery and allusion. In some discourses it is more *popular* than in others—but it is probable that many readers will regard it as *too much so in all*. The cry in our country against an ornamented style in sermons, has long and generally prevailed: and, though the success of some late elegant publications may seem to indicate a revolution in the national taste,—yet much of its severity will be found still to remain. Confident of *their matter*, the divines of the last age, with a FEW GREAT EXCEPTIONS, were negligent of their *manner*: they seem, indeed, to be jealous of embellishment, as incompatible with gospel simplicity; and to esteem it unworthy of a disciple of Christ to enter himself in the school of Tully or Quintilian; while on all occasions, they appear to recollect, that the great apostle's preaching was *not with enticing (a) words*;—they forget, that for its compensation, it was *in demonstration of the SPIRIT, and of POWER*;—they forget, likewise, that

(a) 1 Cor. ii. 4.

the writings of the same apostle, who talks with so much humility of his own preaching, are distinguished by a bold, fervid, pathetic eloquence, calculated in a supreme degree to awaken the attention, and to controul the heart.—Sanctioned, however, by such illustrious patronage, an austere and frigid caution of manner has acquired the full dominion of the English pulpit;—and if the timidity of preaching has ever ventured to soften or to raise its tone, the attempt has usually been branded with the opprobrious epithets of popular, florid, and declamatory.

Under the menace of these censures, the Author brings forward the following discourses—in which the reader will sometimes meet with bold and vehement figures,—and generally with a warm and coloured style.—Satisfied of its effect from the pulpit, the Author hazards this species of composition to the closet;—and he only begs the reader to recollect, that the discourse which he peruses was addressed to a popular audience, whose attention was to be arrested before their understandings could

could be informed, or their hearts be improved :—but, with the general peculiarity of his language, it is by no means the Author's wish to vindicate any *singularities of phrase* of which he may be guilty ; for these, whenever they occur, he solicits no quarter.—*Novelties of expression* have never been affected by him—and to communicate his conceptions, in a way the most clear, and the most forcible, has been upon all occasions his single aim.—Having pleaded for his *language*, the Author must become the advocate for his *arrangement*.

Supported as they are by some respectable examples, even among the present race of preachers, the Author avows, without scruple, his disapprobation of those *ostensible* divisions and subdivisions, which formerly were esteemed essential to a sermon. *Order*, he knows to be indispensably requisite for perspicuity—and of equal consequence to the speaker and the hearer, the writer and the reader ; but of this order, there needs not, he apprehends, be an *ostentatious* display ;—the fence
which

which is concealed being effectual for the separation of the grounds, whilst it neither breaks by its interruption, nor offends by its formality. In the following discourses, therefore, the reader will *seldom* find the divisions obtruded on the sight—but he will, *in general*, the Author believes, discover the *order* to be accurate and luminous, and by the effect distinguished to the understanding.—This artificial disposition, however, is far from being peculiar to the Author: though discountenanced by some modern writers of eminence, it is adopted by *others*; and when *doctors disagree*, and there are — *pila minantia pilis*, a plebeian may embrace either party with an equal prospect of safety.

But in another respect, the arrangement of the Author (as far at least as he knows) is entirely his own; and, he hopes, that its novelty alone will not expose it to condemnation. — While the *former part* of the discourse is appropriated to the display and proof of its subject, the business of the *latter* is to *concentrate*, to enforce

enforce, and to press upon the excited attention, the consequences of the preceding argument. Thus each sermon, besides the divisions dictated by the matter, consists of two necessary parts;—one offered more immediately to the *understanding*, the other more immediately to the *imagination*, and the *passions*; and on this last part, the Author has commonly risked his strongest figures, and lavished his brightest ornament:—whatever may be the sentence passed on this unusual disposition by the *reader*, the experience of its effect on the *hearer* induces the Author, without hesitation, to recommend it to the practice of the preacher,—undeterred by all the ridicule which has been injudiciously and awkwardly thrown on the introduction of *pathos* into sermons.

Of his *matter* the Author is now to speak; and, in this article likewise, he is sensible of some peculiarity to excuse.

As the sermons of the former age were merely expositions of the Scriptures, the sermons of the present days seem to incline to the opposite extreme, and, with a few

a few exceptions, are merely *moral essays*; the Author has seen some applauded discourses, of which the text has formed the only immediate connection with the sacred volume, and which might have fallen with more propriety from the pen of an Epictetus or a Seneca, than from that of a Christian preacher:—to *this extreme*, the Author must be forgiven, if he objects more strongly than to the *other*;—sensible that *religious speculation*, not terminating in morality, is useless, he thinks that *moral disquisition*, not illustrated by the precepts, nor enforced with the motives of religion, is lifeless and uninfluencing;—and that the proper blending alone of these two essential ingredients, can constitute that warm, manly, dignified production—
A SERMON.—Were he, indeed, to judge of the feelings of other persons by his own—the race of *pulpit essayists* would soon, from the want of encouragement, be extinct;—for there is no composition to which he listens with a more fatigued ear, or which he peruses with a more unattracted eye, than one of those in question;

tion;—where some moral duty may indeed be explained,—but where there is nothing to strike, to agitate, to elevate,—where neither the hopes nor the fears are awakened; and, where the heart, being perfectly at rest, the ear has leisure to attend to the regulation and the smoothness of periods: with these sentiments, the Author has *generally* chosen subjects of a mixed nature, on which religion might be made beneficial by morality; and morality be sanctified by religion. If some of his subjects are *principally* moral, and some *purely* religious, from *these* he has deduced consequences which come home to conduct; and to *those*, he has endeavoured to give that energy and truth, which can be derived only from the scriptures:—from the *scriptures*, indeed, he has every where liberally borrowed;—pleased with the simplicity and majesty of their style, he has transferred its riches without scruple, to ennoble his own page; and the reader will frequently observe him applying to the Sacred Writings, for no other object than their language.

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AN learned and ingenious friend, to whom the Author submitted the revifal of one difcourfe, recommended the fuppreffion of a large part of its devotion, as inconsistent with the reigning tafte, and likely to be the object of critical animadverfion;—but, with whatever reason the Author might affign a general preference to his friend's judgment, in this inftance he abided by his own—and retained thofe paffages to which no other crime was objected than their PIETY. *These*, with many others of a fimilar character, are now upon their trial before the public; and the Author abandons them to their fate:—he can only fay, that fully poffeffed by the truths of his religion, he wrote warmly, as he felt; and, that he will not be difpleafed, fhould his difcourfes be diftinguifhed among thofe of the prefent time, neither by their learning, their accuracy, nor their elegance, but folely by *the fervour and the fpirit of their devotion*.—For his *doctrines*, the Author apprehends, that no apology can be neceffary,—he believes them to be thofe of the church

church to which he belongs;—and if any thing in his writings should appear to be of a contrary tendency, it must, he is persuaded, be the effect of *obscure and inaccurate expression*.—On all occasions, he has seen for himself; and neither affecting, nor studiously avoiding novelty, he has given the impressions of his own mind, arranged and illustrated in that manner which appeared to him the most perspicuous and affecting.

Having spoken in behalf of those characters of composition, in which he is fearful of differing from the greater number of his clerical brethren, the Author refers himself, without any further apology, to the decision of an enlightened and candid public—confident of *favour*, should it be the requisition of his *merits*—correction, without severity, is all that he expects for his *errors*;—not indifferent to applause, he acknowledges it only as his *secondary* object;—if he obtain it he will rejoice—if he fail of it—he will not despair.—Without *shining* he may *warm*—and, without *brilliancy*, possess *utility*.—While
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he assumes to inform neither the SCHOLAR nor the DIVINE—he may not be unacceptable to the PIOUS;—he may possibly win casual audience from the THOUGHTLESS and the GAY!—and, should his illustrations of sacred truth strike ONE OF THE SONS OF PLEASURE—should they induce a momentary pause in his career—and direct his examination to the evidences of that SYSTEM on which ETERNITY depends;—should they thus, under the BLESSING OF GOD, be the means of turning ONE from the error of his way to righteousness, and thus save a SOUL from death—the Author would be recompensed an hundred fold, for any censure, however severe, which may be inflicted on the weakness of his ABILITY, the narrowness of his INFORMATION, or the blemishes of his STYLE. 24 OC 62

March 9, 1787.

CON-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

Civil, Moral, and Religious Advantages derived from CHRISTIANITY.

ISAIAH, IX. 2.

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light:—
they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon
them hath the light shined.*

S E R M O N II.

ON DEATH.

HEBREWS IX. 27.

It is appointed unto men once to die.

S E R M O N III.

On Human Discontent; or, the Duty of Submission to GOD.

ROMANS IX. 20.

*Nay but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God!—
Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast
thou made me thus?*

S E R M O N IV.

On the DEATH of CHRIST.

1 COR. I. 23, 24.

*We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block;
and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are
called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and
the wisdom of God.*

S E R M O N V.

On the ATONEMENT of CHRIST.

1 COR. I. 23, 24.

*We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block;
and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are cal-
led, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the
wisdom of God.*

S E R M O N VI.

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SER.

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SERMON IX.

ON THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

1 KINGS, XIX. 12.

And after the fire—a still small voice.

SERMON X.

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ISAIAH IX. 6.

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SERMON XII.

ON THE NECESSITY OF CONSTANT ATTENTION TO THE RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT OF LIFE.

ISAIAH LV. 6.

Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found;—call ye upon him, while he is near.

PRE.

S E R M O N I.

Civil, Moral, and Religious Advantages derived from CHRISTIANITY.

ISAIAH, IX. 2.

THE PEOPLE THAT WALKED IN DARKNESS
HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT:—THEY
THAT DWELL IN THE LAND OF THE
SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM HATH
THE LIGHT SHINED.

THAT some of the predictions of
the Old Testament, which in the
most unequivocal manner point
to the Messiah, may also refer to events
which happened nearer to the prophet's
time, and thus, in two distant ages, have

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received

received a distinct and evident accomplishment,—is an opinion supported by very learned and ingenious commentators. Neither ought we to think it strange were the truth of this opinion incontrovertibly established. When we reflect that the whole of that wonderful fabric, the civil and religious constitution of the Jews, with almost all the leading occurrences in the history of that peculiar people, are declared, by inspired writers, to relate to Christ, and to his church; that the Holy Spirit, when speaking of events more particularly connected with the generation it was addressing, should adapt its expressions so as sometimes to respect the completion of the mysterious scheme;—the great catastrophe (if the allusion may be pardoned) which was to unravel the intricacies of the preceding plot, cannot certainly be the occasion of any reasonable surprise.

With these prophecies of double aspect, that of Isaiah, which I have chosen

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fen for my text, is generally classed.—
From the immediate connection of the
subject, it appears to be the prediction of
some temporal deliverance which shortly
awaited the holy nations; and it probably
was fulfilled in that memorable overthrow
of the Assyrians, by which the Deity was
pleased to reward the piety of Hezekiah,
and to correct the blaspheming arrogance
of Sennacherib.

But, while this occurrence, from its
nearness, attracted the notice of the pro-
phet, the glories of the gospel-kingdom,
in a flood of radiance, burst upon his
sight. Enraptured at the view, he rushes
instantly from his first object, and rises in-
to imagery so exquisitely beautiful and
sublime, as to be suited only to the gran-
deur of that scene which was then un-
folded before him.—*The people that walk-
ed in darkness have seen a great light; they
that dwell in the land of the shadow of
death, upon them hath the light shined.*

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To entertain a just sense of the merits of this glowing picture, we must imagine the prophet as looking down on the world, and commanding its extended prospect with the glancings of his eye. The sad objects which every where strike him, are the imbecility and the blindness—the errors and the crimes of his species. Without a guide to direct them, and with understandings too debased and corrupted to discover their path in the labyrinth of life, he sees that as *rational*, as *social*, as *immortal*, as *accountable* creatures, *they walked in darkness*. In this deplorable condition, unacquainted with themselves, and with their God, he sees that they were abused by the terrors of the most abject superstition; that, whilst they were surrounded on earth with wretchedness and confusion, they could distinguish nothing beyond the limits of mortality to comfort or to controul them; but, convinced that their hopes, and their fears—their schemes of greatness, and of happiness—their

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—their labours in the cause of virtue, or of vice, were alike to be lost in the forgetfulness of the grave, that *they dwelt in the land of the shadow of death.*

From the contemplation of this melancholy spectacle, the prophet is roused by another of a very different nature. The Heavens are opened—the glory of the Lord is revealed. *The nations have seen a great light—nay, upon them hath the light shined.* For the DIVINE INSTRUCTOR hath appeared, and man can no longer be ignorant of what *he is*—what *he is to do*—or what *he is to be*. He is no longer unable to discern his duties, or their foundation in the attributes of his Creator. Beyond this fluctuating and passing state, he beholds *a reward^a appointed for virtue*; and he is assured, *that the labours of the wicked, as well as the just^b, shall follow them.*

^a Mark, ix. 41.

^b Rev. xiv. 13.

That this is the meaning of the text; the application of it by St. Matthew, to the effects of our Lord's first preaching on the commencement of his ministry, will not permit us to doubt.—Let us therefore enquire into the truth of what it *asserts*, and of what it *predicts*. Let us ascertain whether, before the event which we are now assembled³ to commemorate, the nations could with propriety be said to *walk in darkness*: and whether the consequences of that event were so illustrious in their kind and degree, as justly to be represented by the shining of a *great light*. In these times of general knowledge, brought up as we are in the embrace of Christianity; for so many centuries fashioned by its influence, and enlarged by its revelation, we are too apt to forget the source from whence our advantages flow; and too frequently consider them as the acquisitions of our own proper ability.

To chastise the presumption of our conceit, let us have recourse to the annals of

¶ This Discourse was preached on Christmas-day.

those

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those nations, who, before the prevalence of the Gospel, were celebrated for sciences and arts; and to whom, for the pre-eminence of their mental attainments, amidst the barbarism of a surrounding world, the title of *enlightened* has commonly been given.

Over these nations we cannot surely pretend to any superiority of *natural* talents: in every walk of genius they are still before us. In the fine arts, in poetry, in history, in eloquence, they are still our unrivalled masters. If, therefore, we excel them in that more useful and sublime knowledge, which relates to man in his double character of MORTAL and IMMORTAL; of inhabitant of earth, and heir to Heaven (and this alone deserves the name of knowledge), the conclusion will be obvious—*not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy holy name be the glory given* ⁴.

⁴ Psalm cxv. 1.

The knowledge to which I allude is divided into three branches, which, springing from one parent stock, derive from their original the strong marks of a common resemblance. The *political*, which relates to man as the member of a community—the *moral*, which refers to him as an individual—the *religious*, which respects him in his higher capacity, as he stands in connection with another world.—Let us take a cursory view of each of these branches, as they flourished among the *Ancients*, and then consider their state among the *Moderns*. By the comparison, we shall be instructed in the greatness of our obligations to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even where we least suspected its assistance.

To begin then with the *political*.—We are presented by the histories of Greece and Rome with no other forms of civil society, than those of *tyrannies* and *republicks*. In behalf of the former of these, nothing can be alledged. They have universally been repro-

reprobated as injurious to the subject, and dangerous to the despot ; the jealousy of the one seeking for safety from the sword of power, and the resentment of the other for revenge from the dagger of assassination.

But, in the latter mode of government, there is something specious and alluring. A commonwealth talks proudly of liberty and equality, and consequently holds out to its members the promise of civil happiness. From the commonwealths, however, of Greece and Rome, this language was impudent pretence, and this promise barefaced mockery. With true liberty, and proper equality, they were utterly unacquainted ; for, not to dwell on the defects of their several constitutions, which so unhappily reconciled the extremes of licentiousness and oppression, an abuse hostile to every principle of justice, and subversive of the most sacred privileges of humanity, was universally sanctioned by their laws. The abuse to which I point is that of servitude, an abuse which was
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pushed to such excess, that, in many of these communities, the number of the *citizens* was far exceeded by the number of the *slaves*. With what consistency, then, could the patrons of such an abandoned insult on the dignity of man, affect to be the asserters of his *RIGHTS*? Or governments which carried the *substance* of slavery in their *bosoms*, presume to have the boast of *freedom* in their *mouths*?—No. What was formerly said of one of these republicks is strictly applicable to *all*.—They who were free in them were completely free—but they who were not, were the most wretched of slaves.

If we pass from the internal æconomy of these states to their intercourse with each other, the same unrestrained spirit of pride, injustice and cruelty, will still occur to our observation. By mutual interest, indeed, something like a law of nations was established—but of uncertain influence, even

as Sparta,

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in peace,—in war it scarcely pretended to authority; and that evil, which under the wisest regulations must be regarded as one of the principal scourges of the human race, was permitted to rage with unlimited destruction. Its horrid object was to extirpate or enslave; and not only the possessions, but the lives and the liberties of the conquered were determined by its laws to be the property of the conquerors.—Even the vaunted patriotism of antiquity was a virtue of a very questionable, and certainly of a very unamiable description. Always contracted and illiberal, it frequently was fierce and bloody; and ever disposed, by the *imagined* goodness of the *end*, to justify the *manifest* baseness of the *means*. The histories in short of the times to which I am referring, shew us little besides tumult and inequality *at home*, and little besides perfidy and barbarity *abroad*.

If we turn from this unpleasant picture to the view of Christian Europe, we behold
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in it indeed the same forms of government, where the *one* or the *many* preside; but, actuated by a very different spirit, slavery is driven from its limits (would to God I could add, driven from the earth)! the claims of humanity are ascertained and respected. In conscious security, the governor has ceased to be the tyrant. From a sense of protection, the governed have learned to obey, and all the parts of society are bound together by a mixed feeling of interest and of duty. War, it is true, still exists; but the ruggedness of the monster's features is considerably softened, and there are laws which it is taught to revere.

Here, then, is a striking revolution in the political annals of mankind; and to what must we attribute it?—to the mild, the beneficent, the liberal genius of Christianity, which has introduced a patriotism, whose immediate object is our *country*, but whose large arms embrace the *WORLD*—which inculcates the necessary
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subordination of society, yet asserts the natural equality of man—which enjoins the people to *submit⁶ themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*—which tells the prince, that *God⁷ accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor*—which exhorts all to unity, even as they are called to *one hope⁸ of their calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.*

But our superiority over the nations that *walked in darkness*, is still more eminent in *moral*, than in *political* excellence.

If the laws of nature, originally written by the Creator on the heart of man, were not altogether blotted out, the writing was considerably defaced; and, by the canker worm of corruption, part of it was wholly destroyed.

To restore what was thus lost, and revive in some faint degree the divine image in the

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 13. ⁷ Job, xxxiv. 19. ⁸ Ephes. iv. 4.
human

human character, several mighty intelligencies arose, who were elevated above their species by the largeness of their views, and the sublimity of their faculties.

The efforts of these wonderful men were great indeed;—and the success which attended them furnishes an illustrious proof of the capacity of the mind, fallen as it is from its first vigour, and uninstructed by revelation. But the task in which they so nobly engaged, was far beyond their strength. They might, indeed, by *feeling⁹ after God*, attain a weak and indistinct perception of their own nature and destination. But how were they to communicate their grand discoveries to a blind, and gross, and sensual world? with what arguments could they enforce the necessity of duty in opposition to the violence of passion, the importunity of appetite, and the more quiet, but more steady solicitation of interest? To their religion they could not apply for assistance;

9 Acts xvii, 27.

for

for *their* religion, as we shall presently see, was in any case but an impotent ally to their cause, though in many it was a formidable adversary. The SAGE and the LEGISLATOR were on every occasion suspicious of the PRIEST¹⁰, whose legends, with their effects on the credulous people, they were obliged in so many instances, by their precepts and their institutions, to contradict,

¹⁰ That polytheism was the offspring of policy, and indebted wholly to the magistrate for its birth, is a favourite opinion of the late Bishop of Gloucester's, which he labours with all the efforts of his ingenuity to establish. But his efforts are without success.—The origin of polytheism is evident in the blindness, the weakness, and the depravity of man. The interference of the magistrate was long subsequent to the prevalence of the error; and was nothing more than an endeavour to correct its pernicious tendencies. The history of the Roman republic, in which, more than in any other state, the attempt to subdue it to the purposes of government was successful, will convince us how dangerous an instrument it was; and how apt "the devilish engine was to recoil on the hands which wielded it."

How,

How, then, were these friends of their species to secure to their labours the proper effect? How impress their ideas on the bulk of mankind, so as to accomplish the work of reformation?—by urging the fitness of things—by painting the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice—by vindicating the dignity of reason—by calling on man to raise his nature by the contemplation, and the imitation of the Divinity! This was actually their language: these were the topics from which their arguments were drawn. But they were too sublime for the apprehension of the multitude—too languid and too cold to become influencing principles of conduct. They might indeed *play round the head*—but never could they close and wrestle with the heart. The truth of this reasoning is established by the fact. Before the Gospel era, we find, that human nature was abominably depraved; that plunged in the foulest sensuality, and lost in the most sordid aims, it was either a slave to the selfish, or a prey to the turbulent passions.

The

The profligacy of the present times is the frequent and just subject of Christian lamentation and surprise. A peculiar spirit of dissoluteness and irreligion seems to be gone forth, to distinguish our age from that of our fathers. But great as our degeneracy may be for those who profess themselves the followers of *Jesus¹¹ Christ the righteous*, it is yet far, thank God, very far from the greatest. If a too favourable opinion of our nature should induce any person to disbelieve the assertion, let him turn over the page of history, and he will soon be convinced that there have been periods, compared with whose impurity, that in which we live would seem white as innocence itself.— Those unhappy periods were when *the people walked in darkness*. But when *the light¹² of the world* shone, they were no longer of the night nor of darkness, but became *children¹³ of light and the children of the day*.

¹¹ 1 John ii. 1.

¹² 1 John viii. 12.

¹³ 1 Thess. v. 5.

B

That

That he brought down philosophy from Heaven, was extravagant panegyric, when attributed to Socrates; but if given to our blessed Lord, it would be accurately just. Unlike the former instructors of the world, who, conscious of their own weakness, assumed only to reason men into their duty; this Divine Master taught *as one*¹⁴ *having authority*. He not only *enlightened the eyes*¹⁵ *of their understanding*: but he carried reformation to their wills. That sublime, and perfect morality which he inculcated, he enforced with the strongest motives. To the fears of man he threatened the severest punishments; and to his hopes he promised the brightest rewards. Nay the inmost recesses of thought he guarded from the intrusion of evil, by discovering *a searcher*¹⁶ *of hearts who requires purity in the inward parts*¹⁷. When he had authenticated his mission by miracles such as no man ever wrought; and by doc-

¹⁴ Math. vii. 29.¹⁵ Ephes. i. 18.¹⁶ Rom. viii. 27.¹⁷ Psalm li. 6.

trines which alone were sufficient to make the world exclaim, *Thou art*¹⁸ *the Christ, the son of the living God*; in his own character, he proposed an example of those heavenly virtues which he taught; of unaffected lowliness;—universal benevolence;—patience under sufferings;—résignation to the will of God;—forgiveness of injuries;—love of enemies.—The effects were answerable to the cause.—*The people that walked in darkness saw a great light.*

The improvement, which I lately noticed in the political character of mankind, was gradually effected by the soft, yet searching efficacy of the Gospel. But there were circumstances which greatly retarded its completion. The history of those ages which immediately succeeded the elevation of the cross on the imperial palace, offers to our view a singular and memorable spectacle: that of a mighty

¹⁸ Mark viii. 29.

empire inclining through the decays of time, attacked on every side by youthful assailants, and overthrown at length by their repeated efforts, supplying with its ruins the materials from whence many large kingdoms of rough and coarse fashion were erected.

It was long before the tremor consequent to such a convulsion could wholly subside. But Christianity, which had formerly prevailed over the dissoluteness of the South, was in the end equally successful against the barbarity of the North. She triumphed; and in her train followed civility and letters. The fierceness of the world was humbled in her presence; and *the wrath¹⁹ of man was made to praise her.*

This revolution, however, was slowly and laboriously atchieved. But that in the *moral* system was instantly accom-

¹⁹ Psalm lxxvi. 10.

plished.

plished. No sooner did *the sun*²⁰ of *righteousness* appear in the horizon, than the benighted world was illumined with its rays:—and morality and religion, those heavenly twins, who had so long been divided, were once more seen knit hand in hand, and flying through the nations; the *one* scattering blessings upon the earth; —the *other* pointing to a crown²¹ of *immortal glory*, and to the giver of it, *our*²² *Father which is in Heaven*. This naturally leads me to the third branch of knowledge which I proposed to examine, *viz.* the religious: and from the consideration of its state among the Heathen, we shall be still more convinced of our advantages and their defects; of the prevalence of the Gospel, and the insufficiency of reason.

The existence of ONE SUPREME AND CONTROULING MIND appears so evident as to be discoverable, we should think, by the unassisted efforts of the human intel-

²⁰ Mal. iv. 2.²¹ 1 Pet. v. 4.²² Matt. vi. 9.

left. The Divine Artificer, with all his characters, is so impressed on the operations of his hands, that it is astonishing he should ever be concealed. Do not *the*²³ *Heavens declare the glory of God?*—Is not *the earth*²⁴ *full of his riches?*—Are not *his wonders*²⁵ *in the deep?* yet strange as is the fact, for two thousand years before the advent of our Lord, the whole race of man, with exception only to the small nation of the Jews, was in utter ignorance of the hand which formed it.—Amidst the blaze of his works, the great Creator remained undetected even by the improved faculties of Greece and Rome; for whilst a few (and very few) individuals of these cultivated people raised themselves above the general darkness to a distant and doubtful glimmering from the Almighty's throne, the body of their countrymen were, in this respect, sunk to the same low level of ignorance with their barbarous neighbours. The worshippers

²³ Psalm xix. 1.²⁴ Psalm civ. 24.²⁵ Psalm cvii. 24.

of Jupiter or of Mars, of Apollo or of Bacchus, could form no pretensions of superiority over the worshippers of Belus or of Apis, of Brahma or of Fo.—To pursue the Pagan theology through all its fables and puerilities, would be tedious and unnecessary. From the languages in which they are recorded, these are become the entertainment of our schools. But let us not forget that, what at present only serve to amuse and excite the studies of *children*, have formerly commanded the adoration of *men*;—of the learned and the great, no less than of the illiterate and the vulgar.

I will just offer to your attention the inevitably bad influence of such a system on morality, from a superstition which peopled Heaven with human passions, as well as with human bodies:—which furnished to every vice, nay almost to every crime, a celestial patron: which directed these strange gods to be worshipped agreeably to their characters, some

with obscene and flagitious, others with inhuman rites:—which recommended examples of excesses, not only contrary to the precepts of philosophy, but obnoxious to the penalties of the laws;—from such a superstition, I say, what good was to be expected, or what mischief not to be dreaded!—a superstition of these qualities, which misguided and insulted; which might alarm, but could not comfort, was happily represented by a Heathen poet (*a*), as a monster with a horrid countenance looking down from Heaven, and exulting over the abasement of humanity.

Under a scheme of theology so absurd and so nefarious, with what effect could the people be enjoined to reverence their gods? Could they reverence the capricious, the violent, the revenge-

(*a*) *Lucreti: lib. 1.*

Humana ante oculos sædè quom vita jaceret

In terris, oppressa gravi sub religione;

Quæ caput è cæli regionibus ostendebat,

Horribili super adpectu mortalibus instans.

ful,

ful, the lewd? Could they look up with confidence or esteem to creatures, who excelled the worst of mortals only in power and exemption from death? No.—From such gods, contemptible as the objects of worship, and dangerous as the objects of imitation, the best that could be done was to take the sceptre of the world: and (with the prudence of Epicurus) to remove them to a distant heaven; where, undisturbed by the cares of government, they might indulge in their darling sensualities.—The world would certainly not lose by the deposition of these mock rulers; whose place might be as competently supplied by those nonentities of atheism—chance and fate.

During the prevalence of such religious illusion how unhappy and liable to error must be the condition of man! Assured by his observation that *there was one event to ²⁶ the righteous and to the wicked*, that joys and miseries were indifferently scat-

²⁶ Eccl. ix. 2.

tered

tered in the paths of life, he saw no other state of being where the caprices of fortune could be accounted for and rectified. In what manner then was he to act? To accept the splendid offers of vice; or to wed the austerity of unendowed virtue? Reason surely whispered him *to eat and to ²⁷ drink*;—to give his appetites their full riot;—for *to-morrow he was to die*. In a very short time,—a year,—a day,—an hour, perhaps, he was no more. The EARTH-BUBBLE (if I may so express it) was to break.—The sensitive puppet sent upon the stage of existence only, as it seemed, to play a few fantastic tricks;—to enjoy some happiness,—but to suffer much misery, was for ever to vanish, and be forgotten. Horrid and mortifying idea,—the genuine parent of profligacy and of crime!

But it may be said, that the ancients were not entirely strangers to a place of

²⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 32. Isai. xxii. 13.

retribution:—and it must be confessed, that the reasonings of a few amongst them led to conjectures not very remote from the truth. But if the piercing sight of a Socrates, or a Plato, could in the slightest degree penetrate the veil which covered futurity, to the vision of the multitude it was wholly impervious. The classical Elysium and Tartarus appear to be the mere creatures of poetic imagination.— But allowing that they were admitted into the popular creed;—to the purposes of justice,—of encouragement or controul, they were certainly very incompetent.— In the latter place some enormities of a public nature and gigantic growth were indeed menaced with punishment. But to the pollutions (*b*), the vices, and the more

(*b*) A noted passage in the sixth *Æneid* seems to contradict this assertion—it is where the Sibyl, speaking of Tartarus, says,

Hic, quibus invisi fratres, dum vita manebat;

Pulsatusve parens; et fraus innexa clienti;

Aut qui divitiis soli incubuere repertis, &c.

Lib. vi. 608.

But

more pernicious as the more frequent mischiefs of private life, none of its terrors were appropriated. If we regard the former, even when dressed in the gaudiest colourings of poetry, we shall discover it to be but a cheerless and undelightful heaven—too sensual for intellect, and too unsubstantial for sense. In a poet (c), who by many is supposed to be the father of the Grecian theology, we find a hero, who though possessed of all the happiness of the shades, and himself a Demi-God, declares that he would rather be in the lowest class, and oppressed

But Virgil was the poet of philosophy: and for the improvement of his theology was indebted to the sublime doctrines of Plato. It is not from him, therefore, that the received and popular opinion, on the subject in question, is to be gathered. Neither are we to look for it in the partial representations of the latter Platonists; who, to support the drooping cause of Paganism, endeavoured, by allegorizing its fables, to give meaning to its nonsense; and dignity to its weakness and depravity.

(c) Homer *Odyss.* l. xi. 490.

by

by all the evils of humanity, than be Monarch of the dead.

That the immortality (*d*) of the soul was a secret which was disclosed, or rather a truth which was inculcated in the famous mysteries of Paganism, is an opinion advanced in our days, and supported with a great display of learning. But there is reason to think it erroneous.—For, not to urge how improbable it is that any particular proofs of a doctrine so pregnant with advantage to the individual, and the social welfare of man, should be withheld (*e*) from the world;

—I

(*d*) *Vid.* that proud monument of abused learning and perverted ingenuity, “the Divine Legation of Moses demonstrated;” b. 2. sect. 4. The authorities produced in defence of this opinion, are, it must be allowed, many and respectable—sufficient to induce hesitation; but by no means to establish certainty.

(*e*) The author of “the Divine Legation, &c.” endeavours to solve this difficulty; and to reconcile the secrecy of the mysteries with the promotion of those ends, which he assigns to their institution. But, in my opinion, he rather fails of success—if the reader should

—I will notice a fact which makes powerfully against it. Cicero, one of the greatest and most valuable characters of antiquity, after expressing in terms of liberal acknowledgment the benefits which he had derived from his initiation into those mysteries, avows, in one of his Familiar Epistles, without reserve or qualification, his entire disbelief of another state. He either then had never heard of this doctrine at his initiation; or the arguments on which it was founded were insufficient to satisfy his acute and philosophic mind. We may be assured, therefore, that ²⁸ *life and immortality were never brought to light*, or made the subjects of rational assent, before the dawning of the Gospel. Even the Jews had a very imperfect sight of these inestimable blessings. The Patriarchs and Prophets are said to have

should wish to judge for himself, he will find the passage to which I allude in b. 2. sect. 4. p. 148, of the fourth edition.

²⁸ 2 Tim. i. 10.

seen

seen the promises ²⁹ *afar off and to have died in faith.* But the people in this essential article were scarcely more enlightened than *the nations that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death*:—over whose pleasures, whose virtues, and whose glories, the incumbent spectre shed an envious and malignant gloom.

In this melancholy situation was fallen man when the Lord came, who had *the words* ³⁰ *of eternal life.* He dissipated the darkness, and banished the terrors of the spectre. He not only disclosed to us the GREAT FIRST CAUSE, *the Inhabiter* ³¹ *of Infinity and Eternity,* arrayed in all his wonderful attributes of boundless power, wisdom, justice, and holiness;—but in this glorious BEING, he disclosed to us A FATHER, *who hath* ³² *loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope, through grace.* *Who so* ³³ *loved us, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoso-*

²⁹ Heb. xi. 13.

³⁰ John vi. 68.

³¹ Isaiah lvii. 15.

³² 2 Thess. ii. 16.

³³ John iii. 16.

ever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Here, my brethren, let us pause in contemplation of the effects of this Divine Love.—In one instant we behold man oppressed by ignorance;—abused by error;—grovelling in sensuality;—the sport of passion and accident;—sinking under afflictions;—shrinking under the horrors of dissolution;—his reason obscured;—his dignity debased;—the creature OF A DAY, without a TO-MORROW. In the next, *the Lord looked down upon the earth, and filled it with*³⁴ *blessings.*—We then find man with his reason relumed,—his dignity restored;—with all the knowledge suited to his present state; rescued from the abuse of error;—*fighting*³⁵ *the good fight* against appetite and passion; *troubled*³⁶ *on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down,*

³⁴ Ecclef. xvi. 29.

³⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

³⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 8,

but

but not destroyed. Even in the sharp hour of mortality superior to the trial, *rejoicing* ³⁷ *in hope*, and with the voice of triumph exclaiming, *O Death, where is thy sting* ³⁸.—This is *regenerated* man; the child of the new birth. The change indeed is truly marvellous; but not greater than might be expected from the agency of that religion, which the only begotten Son, descending from the bosom of the Father, took on him our nature to impart. A religion who, resembling her Divine Parent, *dwelleth* ³⁹ *on high*, yet *humbleth herself to behold the things that are on the earth*. Heaven is her native place. There she inhabiteth, ⁴⁰ *giving glory, and honour, and thanks, to HIM who sitteth on the throne*. Yet deigneth she to visit our world; to instruct us in all the duties of life;—to bind us more closely together by the ties of brotherly love;—to teach prosperity temperance;—

³⁷ Rom. xii. 12.

³⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 55.

³⁹ Psalm cxiii. 5.

⁴⁰ Rev. iv. 9.

to supply adversity with consolation;—when attacked by temptations to support us;—when fallen to raise us;—even when perversely wandering into wickedness, to persuade,—nay, almost to force us to repentance.—Then—when those lower charities of her ministry are fulfilled, and the short period of our probation successfully accomplished, she openeth for us ⁴¹ *the everlasting doors*; and presenteth us *pure as our Lord is* ⁴² *pure*, and holy as he is holy, at the throne of *Him* ⁴³ *who liveth for ever and ever*.

Such is *the glorious* ⁴⁴ *Gospel of the blessed God*. Its means temporal;—its end eternal happiness. Yet of this pure and undefiled religion;—with all those good things which *eye* ⁴⁵ *hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive*—there are men who endeavour to rob us.—Cruel and unhappy

⁴¹ Psalm xxiv. 7.

⁴³ Rev. iv. 9.

⁴⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

⁴² 1 John iii. 3.

⁴⁴ 1 Tim. i. 11.

men!

men!—Your arguments have been answered times out of number.—But ye *love darkness better than light* ⁴⁶. We will *always rejoice* ⁴⁷ *in the Lord*. We will not let go *the hope* ⁴⁸ *which we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast*.—Neither have we so learned ⁴⁹ *Christ as to return you evil* ⁵⁰ *for evil; or railing* ⁵¹ *for railing*.—Ye would curse us. For our blessed hope, ye would substitute your accursed despair. But we will bless you; and pray, that *the eyes of your understanding* ⁵² *being enlightened*, ye may know him, in whom we are, even *Jesus Christ, who* ⁵³ *of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*.

For us, my Christian brethren! what remains—but to reflect properly on the

⁴⁶ John iii. 19.

⁴⁷ Phil. iii. 1.

⁴⁸ Heb. vi. 19.

⁴⁹ Ephes. iv. 20.

⁵⁰ Rom. xii. 17.

⁵¹ 1 Pet. iii. 9.

⁵² Ephes. i. 18.

⁵³ 1 Cor. i. 30.

*tender mercy of God, whereby the ⁵⁴ day
 spring from on high hath visited us.* Let
 us place before our eyes the invaluable
 consequences of our Lord's advent—intellectual light—moral purity—redemption from the penalty of sin—victory over the terrors of the grave—the means of grace and hope of everlasting glory.—On the view of this bright cluster of blessings, should the fervors of our gratitude inflame; (and we must be dead, indeed, my beloved, if they do not), in what form most pleasing to our benefactor shall they break forth?—What incense most fragrant to Heaven shall they kindle? Shall we prostrate ourselves before that ⁵⁵ *God who is love?* Shall we *blefs Him* ⁵⁶ *who came in the name of the Lord—by whose poverty we were made rich?* Shall we carry our raised devotions to His Holy Table, and there eat *the bread of life?*—All this, my brethren, we must do.—But we must still do more—attend—it is our master

⁵⁴ Luke i. 78.

⁵⁵ 1 John, iv. 8.

⁵⁶ Matt. xxi. 9.

Christ who addresseſs us.—If ye love me, keep my commandments.—A new commandment⁵⁷ I give unto you, that as I have loved you, ye love one another.—By this shall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have⁵⁸ love to one another. Are you entrusted with riches? Let them feed the hungry⁵⁹; give drink to the thirſty;—cloath the naked;—viſit with comfort⁶⁰ the ſick and the priſoner. Are you poor? Be eyes to the blind; and feet to the lame. Diſtribute what is ſtill in your power—the charity of your kindneſs, your compaſſion, your good offices.—Verily I ſay unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the leaſt⁶¹ of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—Then if ye travel, and are heavy⁶² laden, I will reſreſh you.—If in the world ye have tribulation,⁶³ I who overcame the world will bid you be of good cheer. If you are in ſickneſs I will make

⁵⁷ John xiii. 34.

⁵⁸ John xiii. 35.

⁵⁹ Matt. xxv. 35.

⁶⁰ Job xxix. 15.

⁶¹ Matt. xxv. 40.

⁶² Matt. xi. 28.

⁶³ John xvi. 33.

your bed ⁶⁴. If your Spirit be departing, the still sweet voice of the comforter shall whisper to it, *Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy master* ⁶⁵. These are the words of our Heavenly Redeemer.—May the grace of God impress them deeply on our hearts!

⁶⁴ Psalm xli. 3.

⁶⁵ Matt. xxv. 21.

S E R M O N II.

On DEATH.

HEBREWS IX. 27.

IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE.

OF all the subjects on which religion enjoins us to meditate, the most unpleasing is that of Death.

By serious reflection, in some measure to anticipate the hour when we must be torn from the numerous tenderneſſes which ſweeten the intercourſe of ſociety, and

when we must appear with all our frailties, and all our crimes, before the tribunal of the HOLY GOD, may be considered as a melancholy, and a painful task—sufficient to damp even the innocent pleasures, and entirely to overcast the cheerfulness of life. But, my brethren, let us attend to the injunction: and we shall be sensible that in this, as in every other instance of obedience to religion, much real good may be derived from the apparent evil; and health be drained from the cup, the bitterness of which our palates would reject. Let us look upon death with the eyes of our holy faith, and his attendant horrors will vanish; his frowns will soften into smiles; and this *king of terrors* assume the mildness of the *prince of peace*.

In the arrangement of the following discourse, I will first beg your attention to the *necessity* and the *nature* of death; and then to the consequences which properly flow from the preceding considerations.

We

We are assured, by the inspired writers, that man was created after the distant likeness of his Maker's immortality, as well as of his Maker's purity: and that, had he not forfeited the latter, the former had been still in his possession. But here our information deserts us: and vainly does our curiosity enquire with what body was *immortal* man created; or what, when his descendants had overpeopled the world, had been his destination.

We are certain, indeed, that his body could have borne but a very distant relation to our perishing frames, into which, at their earliest formation, are infused the principles of their future dissolution: and which pass, by a stated and invariable process, from growth to maturity, from maturity to decay. With respect to his destination, we may be allowed to conjecture, that, after living for an allotted period upon this earth, where there would have been *no death, neither sorrow nor crying*

crying nor pain, he would have been translated to some brighter paradise; and possibly, with larger powers and a more spiritualized body, have ascended the scale of being and perfection, till he had reached the heaven of heavens, ever distant indeed from it, yet ever advancing nearer to that light in which the Eternal and Infinite dwelleth, which no man can approach unto.

But however great and glorious the privileges of his first nature, he soon incurred the loss of them; and by the abuse of that freedom of action, with which as a creature capable of reward he was necessarily endued, revolting from God, he brought upon himself and his posterity the miserable consequences of sin. *Dust^a thou art, and to dust shalt thou return,* was the sentence pronounced against his disobedience; a sentence which with only two exceptions recorded in the

^a 1 Tim. vi. 16.

^a Gen. iii. 19.

sacred story, has been executed on the whole species with unremitted severity.

To insist upon the certainty of death, or to establish by argument a fact, of which our reason as well as the experience of more than five thousand years cannot suffer us to doubt, would be but an unprofitable waste of words and of time. However open to flattering impressions may be the human heart, it can never persuade us to expect a perpetuity of our present state, nor keep us ignorant that *to die* is as necessary a condition of our nature as *to be born*.

Is there not an appointed time to man upon ³ earth? We know that there is.—

That the springs of life are wound up for a certain period by the hand of the Divine Artificer;—that disease may impede, or accident arrest their feeble movements; but that no effort of human art, or of

³ Job vii. 1.

human power, can prolong them beyond the time decreed for their cessation. That by the same necessity by which youth succeeds to childhood; manhood to youth; age to manhood; death succeeds to age, and closes the eventful scene.

But without pursuing even this easy track of reflection, the same truth will be obtruded upon us by the grosser testimony of our senses.

The picture presented to us by history, is the view of successive generations as they rise one under the other to occupy the world;—to act their part in the drama of existence; and,—afterwards, to leave the stage to beings like themselves;—who with the same low aims, the same little passions, the same imperfect knowledge, the same propensities to evil, the same frail bodies and fallible minds, come to strut or to fret their hour upon it, and then, like their predecessors, to pass away and be heard of no more.

But

But the imagery of the scene immediately before our eyes is of a still livelier and more striking kind. It shews us how ill suited confidence is to *them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth*: for it shews us the small and the great, the wicked and the righteous, the young and the old, going to *their long homes*, whilst the mourners go about the streets.

Are we enamoured of beauty,—or charmed with virtue:—do we admire superior science, or transcendent talents;—are we so puerile as to respect the glitter of wealth, or base enough to despise the sordidness of poverty;—are we so weak as to envy the pre-eminence of station, or timid enough to dread the insolence of power? Let us wait;—and, if our lives be prolonged for a few years, those creatures of our feverish dream,—that beauty, and that virtue; that science,

4 Job iv. 19.

5 Eccles. xii. 5.

and those talents; that glitter of wealth, and that sordidness of poverty; that pre-eminence of station, and that insolence of power; all that excited in our bosoms the tumult of love, or of admiration; of respect, or of contempt;—of envy, or of dread—will vanish from our sight.—The forms which they animated, which they recommended or degraded, will be *all gone⁶ to one place, they were all of dust, and shall all be turned to dust again.*—With the prophet then we must be forced to exclaim,—*All⁷ flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field;—the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it;—surely then the people is grass.*

This may be allowed, my brethren, to be a melancholy consideration; and whilst we are smarting under the affliction of some heart-felt stroke, whilst we are standing by the death-bed of *that friend who*

⁶ Eccl. iii. 20.

⁷ Isai. xl. 6, 7.

⁸ Deut. xiii. 6.

was as our own soul;—of that parent whose cares had supported and instructed our infant weakness;—of that child whose attentions were the cherishers of our declining years;—or of that still dearer connection, whose attachment had alleviated the sorrows and heightened the enjoyments of existence;—we may be inclined to arraign the justice of that sentence by which it is appointed unto men once to die.

But when the madness of anguish is subsided, and reason once more established in her sovereignty, we shall be sensible that *God's thoughts are not as our thoughts*;—that our heavenly Father never practises unnecessary severity; that *he*¹⁰ *chasteneth us only for our profit*; and that the sentence pronounced against the first man was not so much the punishment, as the consequence of his transgression.

⁹ *Isai. lv. 8.*

¹⁰ *Heb. xii. 10.*

The introduction of sin induced the necessity of death.—Had man after his fall from God and his acquaintance with evil *put*¹¹ *forth his hand* (in the Scripture expressions) *and taken also of the tree of life* and eaten and lived for ever, how dreadful had been the result! Allowing even that he were not liable to those natural effects of sin,—infirmity and disease; the condition of man, at once immortal and corrupt, were compleatly wretched indeed.

Fully sensible are we of our weakness and dependance;—we know that our open violations of order are exposed to the censure of human laws;—and that *our secret misdeeds*¹² *are placed in the light of his countenance* before whose tribunal we are shortly to appear; that *there*¹³ *is but a step between us and death*, but an instant, as it were, between the commission of wickedness, and its absolute condemna-

¹¹ Gen. iii. 22.

¹² Psalm lc. 8.

¹³ 1 Sam. xx. 3.

tion.

tion.—And yet we dare to transgress.—What then must be the event were man, by exemption from the grave, to be freed from the restraint of those salutary terrors; the force of which, however powerful, is yet too frequently insufficient to check the sallies of presumptuous passion. All the bonds of society would be loosed. From the hand of the magistrate would be wrested the ineffectual sword. In vain should we, ¹⁴ *knowing the terrors of the Lord, endeavour to persuade.* The weak would become a prey to the strong; the unwary to the designing; and instead of that harmony which at present, though imperfectly, subsists in the moral system, violence, and oppression, and injustice, would reign in uncontrouled riot; and man be given up, helpless and unprotected, to that fiercest of savages—man.

Under such an arrangement of things, without a place where ¹⁵ *the wicked should*

¹⁴ 2 Cor. v. 11.

¹⁵ Job iii. 17.

cease from troubling, and where the weary could be at rest, this earth would be the scene, not of temporary discipline, but of final punishment,—where, and where only, can reside immortality and sin.—But I leave this topic to be pursued by your own reflections; and, having evinced the necessity of death, proceed to consider it's nature.

What then is death? It is the conclusion of our present life by the separation of the soul from the body.—It is the completion of our period of trial.—It is the point where time ends and eternity commences. Each of these views of it we must contemplate, in order to ascertain how far it ought to be dreadful to us.

First, then, it is the conclusion of our present life, by the separation of the soul from the body.—The avenue which leads to death is planted thick with horrors.—On either side are diseases and pain in all
their

their formidable variety; and at the end of the perspective stands the SHADOWY TERROR.—His undefined shape is dimly seen through mists which magnify as they obscure. With one hand he calls us from the warm and busy scene of the world;—with the other he points to *the*¹⁶ *land where all things are forgotten*;—to the worm,—to the rottenness and the oblivion of the grave.

But wherefore is the spectre thus appointed to alarm? Nothing can be more obvious than the answer.—From the overflowing of his goodness the Deity having called us into existence, constituted us free agents to entitle us to reward. But lest we might abuse our freedom so far as to counteract his eternal purposes, and perversely to destroy any part of that system which his wisdom had ordained; He hath placed it, in some of the most essential respects, under the controul of powerful instincts; which are able, in a great de-

¹⁶ Psalm lxxxviii. 12.

gree, to correct and to limit it's extravagancies.

As with one of these instincts he hath insured the continuance of the species; with others he hath provided for the safety and obedience of the individual. Of the latter, the principal is the fear of death; which may properly be called *the cherubim¹⁷ and flaming sword which keep the way of the tree of life.*

But however necessary the instinct, more is to be apprehended from its excess than from its deficiency, and the business of wisdom is not with perverted ingenuity to add to that excess, but, by examining how far it is founded on reason, and how far it is consistent with religion, to weaken and diminish it.

What is it then that we dread from the conclusion of the present life? Is it to be

¹⁷ Gen. iii. 24.

torn for ever from the connexions of this world, it's relations, and it's friendships?

The ties of social life, it must be allowed, press close upon the heart; the wants of our situation induce the necessity of mutual assistance; and from mutual assistance spring a thousand charities which cling about the soul. Certainly, then, to be torn from these must be a painful violence. But religion tells us, that we are to *set our affections on things above, not on things* ¹⁸ *below*;—that *we are strangers* ¹⁹ *and pilgrims upon the earth*; and that *our* ²⁰ *conversation should be in Heaven*, that better country to which she directs our course.

Were we however permitted to doat on the ²¹ *fashion of this world which passeth away*, what certainty is there that the attachments of virtue, which commence in

¹⁸ Col. iii. 2.

¹⁹ Heb. xi. 13.

²⁰ Phil. iii. 20.

²¹ 1 Cor. vii. 34.

this state of being, may not be continued in another? or that the righteous, who have associated together in their mortal condition, may not again meet in that great ²² multitude of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, which stand before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

But we are apprehensive, likewise, of the pang which is to release the soul from the body. The apprehension is not only unwarranted, but contradicted by reason. When death is not hurried on by accident or excess, it is merely the repose of wearied nature,—the termination of decay. It's near approach is usually covered with insensibility, and of the man who comes to his grave in a full age, like ²³ as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season, it may with propriety be said that he ²⁴ fell asleep.

²² Rev. vii. 9.

²³ Job v. 26.

²⁴ Acts vii. 60.

Even where the consummation is hastened before infirmity gives the signal to depart, we may reasonably suspect that the struggles, which are so alarming to the beholder, are very little felt by the expiring;—as it is certain that in many species of fits, when every limb is stretched and harrassed by the most frightful spasms, the patient himself is altogether unconscious of pain.

But should the conflict of nature with dissolution in some possible cases be severe, may we not hope for support in the trying instant from God, ²⁵ *who is our strength, and a very present help in trouble; and who pitieth us even as a father pitieth his own children* ²⁶.

When we are struck by almost daily instances of men, who impatient under the *sufferings of the present time, which are but for a* ²⁷ *moment, or impelled by*

²⁵ Psalm xlv. 1.

²⁶ Psalm ciii. 13.

²⁷ Rom. viii. 18.

the madness of caprice, have braved all these terrors; and, daring to counteract the strongest instincts of their nature, sanctioned by the most positive commands of the sacred law, have rushed, with hands imbrued in murder, to the judgement-seat of their offended God!—shall we, the followers of the blessed Jesus, who is *the resurrection*²⁸ *and the life*;—we, who being *justified*²⁹ *by his grace are made heirs to the hope of eternal glory*;—shall we, my brethren, shrink from the light affliction, and be like those who, *through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage*.

But death is more than the divorce of soul and body:—it is the completion of our period of trial.

I am now addressing myself to *Christians*. To persons, who having been instructed from their infancy in the sublime

²⁸ John xii. 25.

²⁹ Rom. iii. 24.

truths of revelation, cannot be ignorant of the object of their existence. But were I addressing myself to *Heathens* of enlarged and cultivated minds, I should still assert that human life is a period of trial. More than one of the sages of antiquity have asserted the same; nor can reason, indeed, suggest any other theory by which the apparent imperfections of the moral system are reconcileable to that goodness, without which the GREAT RULING MIND cannot be conceived to exist. We look around us, and lo! *there is one event, indifferently to the righteous and to the ³⁰ wicked.* Here the former are oppressed, there the latter are exalted. Is this the work of the LORD our GOD who is holy, *who ³¹ is set in the throne that judgeth right;—all whose works are done in truth?*—Yes, my brethren, it is—for human life is a period of trial.

We are sent into the world as accountable creatures for the purposes of moral

³⁰ Ecclef. ix. 2.

³¹ Psalm ix. 4.

exercise

exercise and discipline. Here it is that we are to be educated, if I may use the expression, for eternity.—Here it is that our vices are to be corrected, and our virtues matured. Here it is that, sometimes assayed by prosperity, and sometimes refined and ³³ *chosen in the furnace of affliction*, we are with fearful pleasure to *work out our* ³³ *salvation*.—And for all this important business is assigned the short interval of human life, the concluding catastrophe of which is *death*.

By him then who is not only in profession but in deed a Christian, *who heareth the word and doeth it*, is death to be dreaded? Most certainly not. For *him* it is to meet the completion of his trial with cheerfulness; for him to exclaim with St. Paul,—*I have* ³⁴ *fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a*

³³ Isai. xlviii. 10.

³³ Phil. ii. 12.

³⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing.

Death is also the point where *time* ends and *eternity* begins.

Not to enter into those metaphysical subtleties respecting the different essences of time and eternity, with which some ingenious men have amused and confounded themselves, it will suffice for our present purpose to consider time as a portion of eternity, or eternity as an infinite extension of time.

We learn from the sacred chronology, that near six thousand years are elapsed since the creation of the world which we inhabit. During this long flight of centuries, how frequently has the whole race of man been extinguished and renovated; how many cities built and destroyed; how many empires founded and subverted;
how

how many revolutions effected even in the earth itself!—Yet this duration of time, in which so many generations have sprung up and flitted by;—so many cities been raised and overturned;—so many empires passed in regular progression from infancy to dissolution;—so many changes taken place, by the gradual formation of new mountains and plains, new continents and oceans, even in the earth itself; this duration, I say, is but a point too small for the intellect to apprehend, when compared to eternity.

Would you endeavour to form an imperfect idea of what no finite intelligence can embrace, to the six thousand add as many millions of years; on these heap as many millions of ages; and let your imagination climb from millions to millions, till it be fatigued with its splendid vanity. Towards your object, after all your efforts, you will not be advanced one single step. For all the millions of ages which you have heaped together, are just as much

much a point to eternity, as the age of the world, the life of man, an hour, or a moment.

When our minds are thus dilated with the greatness of eternity, let us reflect, my brethren, that eternity will be *ours*; that it may be happy or miserable to us, as the day of grace is improved or neglected: and that *death*, which closes this day of grace, will unbar the ³⁵ *everlasting doors*. Let us enquire, then, whether death is to be dreaded.—By them who *walk as children of light*³⁶, who possess *that faith which*³⁷ *is the victory that overcometh the world*,—certainly not. The servant of righteousness will exult when hours, days and months, those measures of his earthly duration, shall be lost in the GREAT YEAR OF HEAVEN;—when *the*³⁸ *sun shall be no more his light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light un-*

³⁵ Psalm xxiv. 7.

³⁶ Ephes. v. 8.

³⁷ 1 John, v. 4.

³⁸ Isai. lx. 19.

to him; but the Lord shall be unto him an everlasting light, and his God his glory.— When secure in his existence, and his happiness, he shall not only see a ³⁹ new heaven and a new earth, when the first heaven and the first earth, and all the former things are passed away—but possibly, in the depths of eternity behold successive systems issuing from the bosom of the DEITY, to display their Creator's beneficence, and to be vocal with his praise.

But the limits of my discourse, forbidding the farther indulgence of these lofty reflections, oblige me to recall your attention to the general consequences of all that has been advanced. And these, my brethren, are important indeed!

If it is appointed unto men once to die— if death not only breaks ⁴⁰ off the purposes of the present life, and the thoughts of the heart, but accomplishes our period of trial, and resigns us to eternity—if in all these

³⁹ Rev. xxi. i.

⁴⁰ Job xvii. 11.

views the awful consummation is met with cheerfulness, and in *some* encountered even with triumph by the righteous;—what estimate ought we to form of life, of death, of righteousness?—Is this the LIFE which we have wasted in frivolous, or in criminal pursuits?—This the DEATH, which in the hour of health we have pushed from our thoughts, and trembled at in the hour of sickness?—This the RIGHTEOUSNESS, which if we have not ridiculed, we have despised;—if we have not despised, we have neglected?

There ⁴¹ *was a garden and in the garden a new sepulchre.*—The state of man in it's best condition resembles such a garden.—Cultivated by the hands of industry and skill, it may produce many *transient*, and some *abiding* plants.—It may boast of the fragrance of it's flowers, or of the raciness of it's fruits. But when it's eulogy is to come from the mouth of HEAVENLY WIS-

⁴¹ John xix. 41.

DOM, it's flowers and it's fruits are passed over as unworthy of notice, and it is only recorded that there is in it only a SEPULCHRE.

All the virtues and the true ornaments of life derive their value from the gloomy neighbourhood.—Our corrupt passions, our mistaken pride, our false hopes, and ill-directed wishes, perish under the shade of the grave.—But *there flourish those wishes which lean on heaven,—those hopes which lay ⁴³ hold on eternal life;—that pride which glorieth ⁴³ in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; those passions whose object is the love of order, of our species, and of our God.*

Before the dawn of the Gospel, when the nations *walked ⁴⁴ in the region and shadow of death*, it was the dictate of wisdom by every artifice to avoid the anticipation

⁴³ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

⁴³ Gal. vi. 14.

⁴⁴ Isai. ix. 2.

of that event, which, in the opinion of those unhappy times, was to ratify the excesses of vice, and to turn virtue to a jest.

But very different, my brethren, is our situation, whom *the* ⁴⁵ *God of grace hath called unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.* We should always recollect, that *it is appointed unto men once to die*; and from the recollection, which was sufficient to overcast the Heathen world with horror, we shall derive not only the security and improvement of our integrity, but a relish also of life, not inconsistent with it's business, it's duties, and it's recreations. Even to *the* ⁴⁶ *house of feasting* should this recollection be introduced. In the danger of that scene it will guard *the* ⁴⁷ *heart, out of which are the issues of life.* And if it should banish that flush of spirits, which may there prevail, it will substitute in it's

⁴⁵ 1 Pet. v. 10.

⁴⁶ Eccles. vii. 2.

⁴⁷ Prov. iv. 23.

room a calm and steady chearfulness, which will beat healthy music in the pulse, and invigorate the soul when *the* ⁴⁸ *mirth of fools shall end in heaviness*, and that *laughter which is mad* be succeeded by sorrow of the heart.

If what has been said should fail of bringing conviction to your bosoms:—if ye should still say, *it is good* ⁴⁹ *for us to be here*;—if you should still meditate to build lasting tabernacles on the uncertainty of life, represent to yourselves the BLESSED SAVIOUR OF MANKIND, as he once appeared upon earth, with all the beamings of the Godhead, *through the veil* ⁵⁰ *of the flesh*;—with that countenance, and that voice of Heaven inviting you to depart from a world where ye are but ⁵¹ *sojourners*;—implore you *to be reconciled* ⁵² *to God*;—nay with tears, such as he once shed over Jerusalem,

⁴⁸ Prov. xiv. 13.

⁵⁰ Heb. x. 20.

⁵² 2 Cor. v. 20.

⁴⁹ Matt. xvii. 4.

⁵¹ Psalm xxxix. 12.

praying,

praying, *that ye* ⁵³ *would know at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace.* Nor, beloved! is this the painting of fancy. The **EYE OF FAITH** will always see him ⁵⁴ *that is invisible*;— and the tongue of awakened reason will always say with the Patriarch, *surely the Lord* ⁵⁵ *is in this place.*

But in the sacred oracles, *the WORD WHO* ⁵⁶ *is GOD!* lives and speaks to the senses. There, with the affection and authority of a parent, he tells us that *the time* ⁵⁷ *is short, that the night* ⁵⁸ *cometh, in which no man can work.* That *this is the accepted* ⁵⁹ *time, and this the day of salvation.* There he exhorteth *the young* ⁶⁰ *to be sober-minded and vigilant, not to boast themselves of to-morrow, for they know not the day* ⁶¹ *of their death.* There he

⁵³ Luke xix. 42.

⁵⁵ Gen. xxviii. 16.

⁵⁷ 1 Cor. vii. 29.

⁵⁹ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

⁶¹ Gen. xxvii. 2.

⁵⁴ Heb. xi. 27.

⁵⁶ John i. 1.

⁵⁸ John ix. 4.

⁶⁰ Tit. ii. 6.

admonishes the old to seek Him ⁶² while he may be found;—to repent—for with them the kingdom ⁶³ of Heaven is at hand. —There he bids the prosperous to rejoice as ⁶⁴ though they rejoiced not:—the poor and distressed to be as having ⁶⁵ nothing, and yet possessing all things:—there he threatens the obstinate with that day in which he will judge ⁶⁶ the world with righteousness.—There he promises to those who have waited for his salvation, that his presence shall go ⁶⁷ with them, and that he will give them rest.

Yes, BLESSED LORD! THOU hast the words ⁶⁸ of eternal Life.—Send down upon us THY HOLY SPIRIT, that his influence may direct them to our hearts—that we may come to THY TABLE, and there keep the ⁶⁹ feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth;—that we may be raised

⁶² Matt. vii. 7. If. lv. 6.

⁶⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 30.

⁶⁶ Acts xviii. 31.

⁶⁸ John vi. 68.

⁶³ Matt. iii. 2.

⁶⁵ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

⁶⁷ Exod. xxxiii. 14.

⁶⁹ 1 Cor. v. 8.

above the allurements of this life, which is even as ⁷⁰ a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away;—that we may so run ⁷¹ that we may obtain;—that thus—when the time cometh when it is appointed unto us to die, we may rest upon the ⁷² rock of our salvation;—we may go on ⁷³ our way rejoicing.—And, as we enter on THY PEACE, we may at length be made sensible how much BETTER ⁷³ IS THE DAY OF DEATH TO THE RIGHTEOUS THAN THE DAY OF HIS BIRTH.

⁷⁰ James iv. 14.⁷¹ 1 Cor. ix. 4.⁷² Deut. xxxii. 15. Psa. lxxxix. 26.⁷³ Acts viii. 39.⁷⁴ Eccles. vii. 1.

S E R M O N III.

On Human Discontent; or, the
Duty of Submission to God.

ROMANS IX. 20.

NAY BUT, O MAN, WHO ART THOU THAT
REPLIEST AGAINST GOD! SHALL THE
THING FORMED SAY TO HIM THAT
FORMED IT, WHY HAST THOU MADE
ME THUS?

IN the beginning of the chapter from
which these words are taken the Apo-
stle, with his characteristic warmth and
boldness, expresses the greatness of his
concern for his countrymen the Jews.—
*I could wish (he says) that myself were
accursed from Christ for my brethren, my
kinsmen according to the flesh.*

Their

Their condition was indeed striking, and deplorable.—For a long series of ages they had been the peculiar people of God. Separated for the purpose of preserving the purity of his worship amidst the superstitions of a dark and corrupted world; they were governed by his laws; enlightened by his oracles; encouraged by his promises; and honoured even with the sensible manifestation of his glory resident in their temple. *Theirs* (in the Apostle's language) *was the adoption, and the glory, (or the SHECHINAH) and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.—Theirs also were the Fathers; and of them as concerning the flesh Christ came.*

But for all these illustrious distinctions their returns had been far from grateful. Before the Babylonish captivity, neither the threatenings of their prophets, nor the infliction of temporal evils, nor the bright display of DEITY itself, could restrain them from falling, with an unac-

countable perverseness, into the sottishness of idolatry. From this indeed they were effectually reclaimed by the severe lesson of a seventy years servitude; nor did they, ever after the period of their return to their country, wander from the worship of the *One God*. But the homage which they paid him was of little worth. For whilst they rigidly adhered to the *ceremonial*, they almost totally disregarded the *moral law*: and were senseless enough to think, that *He who sitteth on the throne of his holiness* would be satisfied with a religion that obeyed his ordinances with her hands, and *drew nigh to him with her lips, whilst her heart was far from him.*

When, therefore, the Saviour of the world took upon him our nature, he came to a gross and depraved people, whose sensual expectations were not to be satisfied with a Messiah, who professed that his *kingdom was not of this world.* The

¹ Psalm xlvii. 8.

² Isai. xxix. 13.

³ John xviii. 36.

Lord of life did not reveal himself in a form which they approved.—They closed their eyes, therefore, against the broad blaze of prophetic light, whose every ray centered in Jesus; and refused to admit their heaven-anointed Sovereign.—Nay, they exchanged him for a murderer, and gave him up to a cruel and ignominious death.

This was the consummation of their iniquity. Their day of grace was now over. *The Spirit of God would no longer strive with them.* Their privileges were taken from them and conferred on the Gentiles, whom they despised. The sword of destruction, just ready to fall, was suspended over their heads:—and the period of their final dispersion was at hand, when, by the singularity of their punishment, they were doomed to supply one unanswerable argument for the divinity of that mission which they had rejected.

4 Gen. vi. 3.

From

From the commiseration of this calamitous state of his countrymen, the Apostle proceeds to answer that charge of injustice and capriciousness, to which, by the rejection of that people whom it had formerly chosen, Providence seemed to be exposed. As addressed to the Jews, the vindication is partly founded on circumstances of the Jewish history, but its spirit, of a more general nature, is derived from the *littleness of man* contrasted with the *greatness of God*; from the sovereign right of the *Creator* to dispose, and the utter incapacity of the *creature* to judge.

There may be apparent inequalities in the divine dispensations; but who art *thou* whose comprehension affects to embrace the mighty scheme of Deity, and to involve it with all its relations? Art thou not *man*—that thing whose habitation is a point of space; whose intellect is imprisoned in matter; whose judgement is the fool of passion? And dost *thou* pretend to convict Infinite Wisdom of imperfection,

perfection, or Eternal Justice of unrighteousness? Omnipotence, it is allowed, might have made thee otherwise than thou art; with less infirmity;—larger powers; and faculties of a wider range. But thou wast taken but yesterday from the dust;—thou hast received from the divine bounty existence, reason, freedom, the means of accomplishing with success thy trial upon earth, and of opening by thy endeavours the *everlasting doors* of Heaven. When He has already given thee so much, is thy gracious Benefactor to be arraigned for not giving thee more? Accountable to none for the disposal of what was absolutely his own, the DIVINE WORKMASTER might, without injustice, have made thee less, or have placed thee lower. It was His to complete the beauteous variety and subordination of being, in the manner best suited to his own GREAT IDEA. Every mode of existence proceeded from his love, and thine is par-

Psalm xxiv. 7.

ticularly

ticularly expressive of its heavenly original. To acquiesce therefore in what thou canst not understand, is thy truest wisdom: to be thankful for what thou hast received, thy strongest duty.

This is the fair construction of the reasoning so admirably compressed into the narrow compass of the text; *nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

Whether the Apostle's argument be altogether restricted to the dispensations of the supreme Governor, as they regard man in his aggregate capacity, when collected into communities; or whether it may be in part applicable to the same dispensations, as they affect the destination of individual man, it is not our present purpose to enquire. Let it only be remarked, that while the *former* position has been supported by the ablest commentators,

mentators, the *latter* has supplied a large division of Christians with their dark and dangerous doctrine of election and reprobation.

In unfolding the closeness of the text, my object has been to adapt it to the purposes of general instruction, by giving to it the largest meaning of which it was susceptible. To hush the murmurs of human ingratitude;—to evince the folly, as well as the unreasonableness of replying against God;—and to inculcate submission, where knowledge is unattainable, shall be the aim of the following discourse.

Wherever we direct our view and find man, we find complaint.—And this planet which ought to be an altar breathing to Heaven the sweet favour of thanksgiving, is ever offending it's benevolent Creator with the vapours of censure and accusation. The causes of this melancholy truth may be divided into *general* and

and *particular*, as they are extended to the *species*, or confined to the *individual*. Of the first class, that law of our nature which enforces DEATH is the principal.

Every age has heard it lamented that virtue and vice; wisdom and folly; knowledge and ignorance; after a short watch upon earth, should sleep alike in the dust. Among the Heathen, not only the van-glorious Monarch (a) who wept on the reflection, that of all his mighty host, not one would survive the flight of a century; but more correct and elevated minds, moralists and philosophers, have bewailed the inevitable extremity.

Some indeed were guided by the light of nature to a distant prospect of immortality. To those who applied their minds with attention to the subject, it was obvious that the principle which *perceives*, and *abstracts*, and *compares*, and *determines*; could bear no affinity to *extension*,

(a) Xerxes.

or

or figure, or solidity, or any of the properties of matter. As it was not material, it could not be dissoluble like matter; and must therefore be possessed of independent existence. Death then might be a change only, and not an extinction of being. This was the argument of unimpaired reason. But the hope which it suggested was too languid, and too indistinct to compensate for the warm and palpable endearments of life.

Even to his chosen people, the Deity was not pleased to make such a full disclosure of man's destination, as was sufficient to reconcile him to the gloom of dissolution. The patriarchs and prophets are frequent and loud in their lamentations, that man is like a thing of nought; that he is altogether vanity;—that he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down;—that he is even a wind that passeth

⁶ Psalm cxliv. 4. ⁷ Psalm xxxix. 5.

⁸ Job xiv. 2. ⁹ Psalm lxxviii. 39.

away,

away, and cometh not again;—that he fleeth also like a ¹⁰ shadow;—and that there is neither work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the place whither he goeth¹¹.

But the radiance of the Gospel dissipated the darkness which hung over futurity. *The sun of righteousness arose with healing on his ¹² wings, and by revealing distinctly to the eye of faith a building of God, ¹³ a house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens, appeased that anxious flutter of the heart with which man regarded the close of his mortality.* If before it was weak to repine at a consummation which could not be avoided; it now was unreasonable and unthankful to repine at one which ought to be desired. To the *Christian* death is the completion of his warfare.—The goal where angels attend to crown his successful race:—the passage which leads from this vale of tears

¹⁰ Job xiv. 2.

¹¹ Ecclef. ix. 10.

¹² Mala. iv. 2.

¹³ 2 Cor. v. 1.

to that better¹⁴ country, where there is neither sorrow,¹⁵ nor crying, nor any more pain.

But the dread of death is closely interwoven with our constitution.—It is;—and for the wisest purposes. *Reason*, however, is able to controul the powerful instinct, and *Faith* to overcome it.

Are the struggles of departure very terrible? It is probable that they are the mere bugbears of fancy.—Or if they be something more, it is certain that, short in proportion as they are severe; and introductory to a never-ending existence, they are wholly unworthy of our apprehension.

Is the thought of separation from friends afflicting? The separation may not be final. Virtuous friendships begun in this land of shadows, may be continued in the land of

¹⁴ Heb. xi. 16.

¹⁵ Rev. xxi. 4.

realities. Or a new condition of being, by inducing new duties, may render those intercourses as disregarded as unnecessary.

Under the Gospel revelation, therefore, to murmur at the dispensation of death must argue a strange defect in faith, or in conduct. When we hear a voice ¹⁶ from Heaven saying, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*, it must surely be our own fault, if *the day of our death be not much more to be praised than the day of our birth.*

That this life must conclude, is one cause of frivolous complaint;—that it must soon conclude is another.—Before the human intellect has made any considerable progress towards it's possible attainment—when it has grasped only a small portion of that excellence which it has in view, it's career is invidiously ar-

¹⁶ Rev. xiv. 13. ¹⁷ Ecclef. vii. 11.

rested by death. For man can only just look about him, and *to his days are past, his purposes*¹⁸ *are broken off, even the thoughts of his heart.*

But the duration of man's life is adequate to it's great objects. If the interval between infancy and age be occupied by honest industry, those virtues may be induced, and the rudiments of that knowledge acquired, which in a more favourable state of things may climb to perfection. So far as the interests of the community are concerned, the growth of science may, perhaps, be more happily advanced by the efforts of many and successive minds, than it could be by the long-continued strain of one, or of few.

When the new-formed earth was to be peopled and subdued; the first arts of rude society to be discovered; and the most important truths to be preserved by

¹⁸ Job xvii. 11.

tradition, an extraordinary longevity seemed to be necessary;—and it was granted. But with the necessity it ceased. And who is he that bewails the contracted term which has succeeded to it?—Is it the legislator or the sage, whose exertions for the welfare, or the dignity of their species, are defeated by it? No.—These sublime spirits, with a feeling of satisfied duty, confide their labours to the efficiency of a good Providence: and, respecting themselves, are assured that the buds of virtue and of intellect will expand into blossoms, and ripen into fruits beneath the indulgency of happier skies. Is it the righteous, or the pupil of heavenly wisdom, who, with a sacred avarice of time, seizes upon each instant, and give it to improvement?—No; to these who have thus *chosen that* ⁹ *good part*, the period of mortality is actually extended. Possessed of the true estimate of life, they are sensible, that although it be far above their

⁹ Luke x. 42.

contempt,

contempt, it is yet unworthy of their attachment: and if their gracious Parent is pleased to consider it's term as sufficient for *trial*, they are feelingly convinced that it is sufficient for *enjoyment*.

Who is it then that, favoured with *the glorious Gospel* ²⁰ of the blessed God, reproaches his Creator for making his life as it were a *span long*?—It is the worldly minded, and the wicked, whose projects of criminal aggrandisement are disconcerted by the rapid advance of death, and *whose expectations are to perish in the grave* ²¹. It is the thoughtless and the licentious, who, (miserable error!) deem the great business of man to be amusement; and who complain with inconsistent propriety, if I may hazard the expression, of the tediousness of hours, and of the fleetness of life.

That the mischiefs of the *former* unhappy class of mortals should be restrain-

²⁰ 1 Tim. i. 11.

²¹ Prov. x. 28.

ed by an effectual controul, cannot certainly be the subject of reasonable regret. And to the *latter*, even the stretch of Antedeluvian existence would be short and unavailing. With days,—years,—ages unnoticed or unimproved, it's conclusion would rush upon them suddenly, and surprise them unprepared for the alarming change. — With reference to eternity, or to the man, a thousand years would be no more than the three-score and ten which are at present indulged.

We now come to a cause of complaint which seems to be more entitled to attention and investigation; *the days of ²² the years of human life are not only few, but they are likewise evil.*

The fact rests upon the testimony of all ages, and cannot be controverted.—The annals of the world are but a register of the follies, the crimes, and the ca-

²² Gen. xlvii. 9.

lamities of man. And our own observation assures us, that the picture of private life is not less deeply tinged than that which darkens the page of the historian. Wherever we turn, the groan presses full upon the ear. Some rational expectation of happiness disappointed;—some charity which grew to the heart torn away;—some innocent gratification destroyed by the ravage of natural or moral evil, pours out it's unavailing lamentation.

To dwell on the detail of all those ills that flesh is heir to, and which confirm the assertion of Job, *that man²³ is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*, would be a melancholy; and, at present, a superfluous task.

Even without *positive* misery man cannot be happy. When favoured with every advantage, he flies from the *present* to the *future*; from *acquisition* to *pursuit*,

²³ Job v. 7.

and his enjoyment is nothing but the alternation of mortified and excited hope.

May not therefore *the thing formed* say to him that formed it, *Why hast thou made me thus?* I asked thee not for existence. Why then did'st thou obtrude it, if it must be followed by affliction? Creation, it is pretended, is the work of love. Why then am I placed in a world which brings forth only thorns and thistles?—Why gifted with eyes looking afore and after, when the retrospect is misery, and the prospect disappointment? The spells of hope, indeed, may sometimes raise a palace to cheat our fatigue, but reflection quickly dissolves the shadowy fabric: and we find ourselves still upon the blasted desert, or in the howling wilderness.

Cease, wretch! forbear the frantic expostulation. It is ignorance,—ingratitude,—impiety.—Go to REASON;—she will tell thee, for she has told many, that this
life

life is not the completion of thy being;—that it is the period only when thy obedience is to be ascertained;—thy mental energies called forth; thy virtues strengthened, exalted, refined, and prepared for a more illustrious condition.—Go to REVELATION;—she will tell thee that thou art *a stranger and a pilgrim*, whose home is beyond the grave. That thou art here upon trial, surrounded with afflictions to exercise, and with temptations to assay;—that thou must *fight*²⁴ *the good fight*, and be victorious before thou art crowned:—that, as thou art a labourer in the vineyard, thou must toil before thou art paid.

And will not this view of life reconcile thee to it's aspect? It's *final* purpose is happiness, but that purpose it is in thy power to defeat.—Wilt thou then quarrel with natural evil, when it may be fruitful of moral Good?—With that parental *chastening*²⁵ *which was intended to yield*

²⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

²⁵ Heb. xii. 11.

the peaceable fruits of righteousness? With those light ²⁶ afflictions which are but for a moment, and which were commissioned to work in thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? It must be thy own fault if the BLASTED DESERT of which thou talkest do not blossom ²⁷ like the rose; and the HOWLING WILDERNESS break forth ²⁸ into singing. Cease, then, from complaint—in the very bosom of misery thou mayest find subject for thanksgiving—for thou mayest know that ²⁹ tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.

What has been said may be sufficient in every situation to persuade acquiescence, and for murmuring to substitute acknowledgement.

But it may still be objected, that the difficulty of the question is a little remo-

²⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

²⁸ Isai. lv. 12.

²⁷ Isai. xxxv. 1.

²⁹ Rom. v. 3.

ved only, and not overcome. That the circumstances of this life are indeed admirably suited to the purposes of trial.— But from whence the necessity of trial?— Would it not have been more worthy of the Lord ³⁰ who is good to place man at once in a state of final happiness; or, at least, to endue him with such powers as would ensure the victory in his wordly warfare? Is it *righteous* to assail infirmity with temptations to which THE DIVINE PRESCIENCE must know that it will frequently yield? or is it *supremely beneficent* to make previous suffering the condition of subsequent enjoyment?

We will answer: That a course of trial appears necessary to determine that obedience of rational creatures which alone is acceptable to God. That, allowing man to be a free agent; and without free agency he would be wholly undeserving of happiness, no finite powers would in-

³⁰ Psalm lxxxvi. 5.

fallibly secure his integrity; for some of the *angels*³¹ *themselves kept not their first estate*.—That his present trial is exactly adjusted by INFINITE WISDOM AND MERCY to his capacity, his strength, his opportunities; and that he will not *be*³² *tempted above that he is able*. That this life is, therefore, always a *day of*³³ *salvation*; or the certain means, if not neglected, of attaining eternal happiness. That the reward will be proportioned to the virtue; and the virtue must be proved by the force of the trial which it has successfully engaged. That, after all—the *drop* of temporal evil, compared with the *ocean* of eternity, is too minute for consideration:—and that the recollection of distresses supported, and temptations resisted, by patient and vigorous duty, may enhance the pleasures of an hereafter.

These are some of the many reasons which may render a preliminary term of trial

³¹ Jude vi. 2 Pet. ii. 4.

³² 1 Cor. x. 13.

³³ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

just, necessary, and even desireable. The proper discussion of the subject would extend far beyond the limits of a pulpit discourse. I shall dismiss it, therefore, with observing, that, in the further pursuit of it, some darkness might rest upon our path. But where the enquirer is MAN; and the subjects of enquiry the counsels of THAT GOD *who*³⁴ *hideth himself, and maketh his*³⁵ *pavilion round about him with dark water*—it is wonderful that so much should be disclosed.

Let any man, who is discontented with what he is, apply to the oracles of truth. If his understanding be correct, and his desire of information sincere, he will be so enlightened with their revelation, so comforted with their promises, so assured that the thoughts of his heavenly Father towards him *are thoughts of*³⁶ *peace, and not of evil*; that for a few obscurities he

³⁴ Isai. xlv. 15.

³⁵ Psalm xviii. 11.

³⁶ Jer. xxix. 11.

will not *reply against God*; satisfied that, although he now see through a ³⁷ glass darkly, a period is at hand, when he shall see face to face, and know even as he is known.

The three causes of general complaint have been considered, and their futility sufficiently exposed.

The plan of the discourse would now lead our attention to the causes of *particular*, or *individual* complaint, as they stand detached from the others. But their variety mocks arrangement; and their insignificance precludes refutation. Every day-dream of enjoyment which is disturbed; every feverish desire which is ungratified; every grievance begot on idleness by caprice, ventures to lift up its feeble voice against order, and to *reply against the HOLY GOD*. These clamours are not to be quieted by argument. With proper

discipline to reclaim the wanderings of the mind; and by the means of proper instruction to enlarge it's scope; are the only effectual remedies for these dangerous though childish excesses.

— And now, my brethren, let us with astonishment contemplate on *the* THING FORMED, and on HIM that formed it.

When I consider ³⁸ *the Heavens, the work of thy fingers, and the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, LORD what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him, or the son of man, that thou so regardest him.—Throned* ³⁹ *in that light which forbids approach, and completely blessed in THY GLORIOUS SELF, it was thy love alone which called him from the ground; which made him after thy own likeness; which placed him in the garden that THOU had'st planted. His obedience was lightly tried;—yet it failed:*

³⁸ Psalm viii. 3.

³⁹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

and

and he broke the harmony of thy creation with the disorder of sin.

The law was violated, and the forfeiture of that being which Thou had'st given most righteously incurred. Did'st THOU urge the dreadful forfeiture?—Did'st THOU permit the law to exact its rigid penalty? NO.—BLESSED GOD! THOU did'st not urge the dreadful forfeiture.—THOU did'st not permit the law to exact its rigid penalty.—MERCY prevailed;—yet JUSTICE was satisfied.—THY SON offered himself for the criminal:—and THOU did'st not refuse the mighty sacrifice.—As man, HE submitted even unto death for man. His unfining obedience atoned for violated order; and reconciled THY FIGHTING ATTRIBUTES. For righteousness not his own, man was restored to thy favour.—The sufferings of THY SON opened to him *the hope of Glory*; and the example of THY SON suggested to him *the means of grace*.

And

And shall this TWICE-CREATED THING, so eminently the object of THY DIVINE LOVE, fret under Thy corrections;—or reply against Thy wisdom?—Pardon it, GRACIOUS FATHER, *who*⁴⁰ *rememberest that he is but dust*;—and forbid it!—Teach him not to *call evil*⁴¹ *good, nor good evil*!—And when THY GREATNESS, which the HEAVEN OF HEAVENS cannot contain, swells beyond the narrowness of his understanding,—O instruct him, that,—although *clouds*⁴² *and darkness may be round about Thee, righteousness and judgement are the habitation of thy seat.*

My brethren!—Shall the prayer be heard?—Let your own endeavours call down the blessing of Heaven.—Indulge not in any fallacious system of life.—Be assured that to all it's conditions are attached their duties, and their dangers;—their comforts, and their uneasinesses.—The glow of maturity has it's disadvanta-

⁴⁰ Psalm ciii. 14.⁴¹ Isai. 5. xx.⁴² Psalm xlvii. 2.

ges;—the chillness of decline may have it's compensations.—In the flavoured draught of prosperity there is frequently intoxication;—in the bitter one of adversity there may be health.—With this assurance, be satisfied where you are;—nor *reply against God* by defrauding his appointment of it's wise and benevolent purposes!

In the strength of youth, with life's extended prospect before you,—be not too confident in your strength,—for it may fail; nor boast of the extent of your prospect, for it may be shortened.—Fix your eyes steadily on the mighty object of your existence!—Lay hold of *to-day*, while ⁴³ *it is yet called to-day*;—nor ⁴⁴ *neglect the great salvation* which may hang on it's event! Suffer not your warmth to step beyond those eternal limits of right which the AUTHOR OF THE MORAL WORLD has established:—but let it open the embrace of large philanthropy; and lift up the hands of generous devotion!

⁴³ Heb. iii. 13.

⁴⁴ Heb. ii. 3.

In the infirmity of age, the pleasures of *sense*, it is true, are no more,—and the pleasures of *intellect* considerably diminished;—but the more exquisite pleasures of *conscience*, exulting on the grave of sense, and strong in the decay of intellect, still may be your own.—Every delusion, which has been detected by wisdom;—every trial, which has been eluded by prudence, or overcome by virtue;—every sacrifice of selfish passion to society, or to God, will then rise,—and *with the tongues of* ⁴⁵ *angels*, will speak comfort to your soul.—Do not then merely acquiesce, but rejoice in your situation!—You have lost, indeed, the sparkle of youth; but you are exempted from its dangerous ferment.—The enjoyment, indeed, of life is escaping from your pursuit;—but you will soon be beyond its persecution. This world, indeed, is closing on your view;—but a FAR BRIGHTER is unfolding to receive you.

44 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

Are you blessed with affluence and with power?—Be temperate;—be humble;—be tender-hearted;—be happy by the diffusion of happiness; and be grateful to *the Giver* of your fortunes, by cherishing the afflicted,—by raising the fallen, by supporting the oppressed, and *him* ⁴⁶ *that hath no helper.*

Are you in obscurity or distress?—Be patient;—be resigned;—be thankful that the provocation to excess is withheld;—admit no distrust of Providence;—nor perversely ask,—*can* ⁴⁷ *God furnish a table in the wilderness;* but *fear* ⁴⁸ *not, stand still;—and ye shall see THE SALVATION OF THE LORD.*

If, brethren, we have happily attained that tone of mind which never jars with our MAKER, we may approach without fear to that *holy Feast*, which is to be celebrated on the ensuing Sab-

⁴⁶ Psalm lxxii. 12.

⁴⁷ Psalm lxxviii. 19.

⁴⁸ Exod. xiv. 13.

bath. To those whose hearts and conduct proclaim glory⁴⁹ to God, and peace to man, the Saviour speaks,—*Come eat of*⁵⁰ *my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled! Come ye*⁵¹ *blessed of my Father!* and on the pious commemoration the choicest blessings shall attend. The awakened feeling of my sufferings shall not permit you to rob them of their reward; and my spirit shall pour into you *that love* for your souls, which brought me from the bosom of my Father to bear the⁵² *chastisement of your peace.*—That so, whether solicited by pleasure, or pressed by affliction, ye may always act under the influence of that invigorating consolation, —*He, who*⁵³ *overcometh shall inherit all things,*—and I WILL BE HIS GOD, AND HE SHALL BE MY SON.

⁴⁹ Luke ii. 14.⁵⁰ Prov. ix. 5.⁵¹ Matt. xxv. 34.⁵² Isai. liii. 5.⁵³ Rev. xxi. 7.

S E R M O N IV.

On the DEATH of CHRIST.

1 COR. I. 23, 24.

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED, UNTO THE JEWS A STUMBLING BLOCK; AND UNTO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS; BUT UNTO THEM WHICH ARE CALLED, BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS, CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD.

WE are assembled, my Christian brethren! to commemorate the great atonement which was made for sin, by the passion and death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.—May the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT form and raise our minds to the importance of the occasion! that

that I may be, in some degree, equal to the discharge of my arduous duty;—or that your attentions may be diverted from the insufficiency of the Preacher to the grandeur of the subject, which it is his business to illustrate.

The first progress of Christianity was resisted principally by the carnal prejudices of the Jews; and the scientific pride of the Greeks;—by the *former*, which in *him who was hanged on a tree* refused to acknowledge that triumphant Messiah, whom they expected; and, unremoved by those evidences of Divinity which attended the life, and succeeded to the death of the blessed Jesus, still *asked for a sign*.—And by the *latter*, which opposing man to God, the glimmering of reason to the blaze of revelation, contemptuously rejected that scheme of redemption which it was unable to comprehend, and, in the delusion of a vain and arrogant philosophy, still sought after wisdom.—But *we* (says the Apostle) *preach* CHRIST

CRUCIFIED, *to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

We, my brethren, are, I trust, among those *who are called*.—But there are some, (and our charity should induce us to hope that there are not many) to whom the doctrine of the cross is a *stumbling-block*, as it was to the Jews; and *foolishness*, as it was to the Greeks. For the preservation, therefore, of our integrity, from the taint of any contagious neighbourhood, it may not be unserviceable to contemplate the mystery of a crucified Redeemer in that view of it which is presented to us by the text:—not as an instance of patient suffering;—a miracle of condescension;—a prodigy of Divine love; but as a wonder of *power* and of *wisdom*,—an object to be offered to the *understanding* rather than to the *passions*.

To

To follow the order pointed out to us by the Apostle, let us first enquire what traces of *power* are discoverable in the humiliation and death of our Lord, which can authorise the assertion, that *Christ crucified was the power of God*.

If we turn to the sacred annals, we shall find, that the flashes of the Saviour's divinity, which broke out through the whole course of his ministry, were less interrupted, and more brilliant as he approached to the end of his illustrious career. During the period of his residence on earth, *he went about doing good;—anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power, and declaring by his works, that God was with him.* But, towards the important close, the scene rises upon us in interest, and the HEAVENLY MASTER in dignity.—When *by his own blood he is about to enter into the Holy Place*, he

¹ Acts x. 38.

² John iii. 2.

³ Heb. ix. 12.

more

more particularly asserts the eminence of his nature, by a fuller display of the Godhead. The recesses of the human mind seem then to be more open to his penetration; and the future, however involved by the extravagancies of free agents, is compleatly developed under his eye.—His latest breath, which he surrenders by an act only of his own will, is accompanied with miracles; and not degraded by the apparent ignominy of his punishment, he rises from it to glory and dominion.—The detail of these instances will satisfy us, that *Christ crucified was the power of God.*

From the multitude of his followers, the Lord selected twelve to be his peculiar disciples. To these he revealed himself so evidently, as to force them to acknowledge that he was *the Christ of God*;—to these he gave the more immediate instruction of his unfinning life;—

Luke ix. 20.

to

to these he indulged the divinity of his familiar discourse ;—that thus with minds reformed, enlarged, and led on *from faith to ⁵ faith*, they might be prepared for that full communication of the Holy Spirit, which after his decease was to accomplish them for the labours of their arduous ministry. Could any events, therefore, be more improbable, than that one of this favoured and enlightened band should betray ;—that another should deny ;—that the whole, forward as they afterwards were to suffer, and to bleed in his cause, should desert their innocent Master, their gracious Benefactor, and their heavenly instructor? Yet each of these wonderful events actually came to pass ; and each of them was foretold to Judas, to Saint Peter, and to the twelve, with a degree of accuracy and power suited only to the great Searcher ⁶ of hearts.

When the Saviour approached to Jerusalem, it was proper, by the full dis-

⁵ Rom. i. 17.

⁶ Rev. ii. 23.

closure

closure of the fate which awaited him; of the reasons which made it necessary, and of the consequences which would result from it, to awaken his disciples from that dream of temporal dominion, in which they so fondly and so obstinately indulged. This he effects in such a manner, as sufficiently to prove, that all the springs of the complicated machine are governed by his hand; and that he is *the Lord, which was, and which is to come*. In such lucid order does he place before them the several circumstances of his passion, that the Jews, when contrary to every principle of equity, they refuse to try him by that law (a), to which alone, as a Jew,

7 Rev. iv. 8.

(a) That the Sanhedrim under the Roman government retained the power of punishing with death offences committed by Jews against their own law, is evident, I think, from many passages in the new Testament, as well as from Josephus, and the general spirit of the Roman dominion.—When Pilate told the Jews to take Jesus, and to judge him according to their law, his intention could not surely be to insult them with the loss of their privileges. The proposition seems to have been rejected,

a Jew, he was amenable;—that the ROMAN GOVERNOR, when in opposition to the usage of the Romans, he condemns a freeman unconvicted of any crime to the punishment of a slave;—that the ROMAN SOLDIERY, when forgetful of the military character they exercise on the meekest innocence, that cruelty which even resistance would be insufficient to justify—appear to be nothing more than the instruments of the GREAT HIGH-PRIEST, preparing to conciliate ETERNAL JUSTICE, by the immolation of Himself.

jected, in consequence of treason being the principal article of accusation against our Lord. *We found this fellow perverting the people, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar; saying, that he himself is Christ, a King*—was the charge which brought Jesus to the tribunal of the Roman.—That *he made himself the Son of God*, was objected to him when his innocence in other respects was fully ascertained.—That there was after all something extraordinary in the refusal of the Jews to try him by their law, is intimated by the Evangelist, when he says, that it was in order *that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.* JOHN xviii. 32.

But

But let us repair to Golgotha, and there we shall be more fully convinced, that *Christ crucified was the power of God.*—Attend—I beseech you—minutely attend to the wonders of the scene.

Behold!—the Son of Man is led forth amidst the insults of an unfeeling rabble.—*He is numbered ⁸ with the transgressors!*—He is nailed to the bloody tree—he seems to sink under the persecution of his fortune—to be forsaken, and stricken by Heaven.

Is this *he who was to redeem ⁹ Israel?*—this *He who came in the name ¹⁰ of the Lord?*—this *He to whom all the prophets ¹¹ gave witness?*—this *He who shall be called Wonderful, ¹² Counsellor, the MIGHTY GOD, the EVERLASTING FATHER, the PRINCE OF PEACE?*

⁸ Isai liii. 12.

⁹ Luke xxiv. 21.

¹⁰ Matt. xxi. 9.

¹¹ Acts x. 43.

¹² Isai. ix. 6.

Yes—

Yes—this is he;—and there, raised on the throne of moral dignity, he exercises the prerogatives of his superior nature.—There he intercedes for his ¹³ murderers.—There he pardons ¹⁴ the penitent.—There, with the future glory of his church full in prospect, He waits ¹⁵ for the completion of one unaccomplished prophecy.—And then, when he perceives that *it is finished* ¹⁶—that every rite of the sacrifice is duly performed, he commends his spirit into his Father's hands, and by an effort (b) of his own sovereign power, consummates his propitiatory sufferings with death.

Is

¹³ Luke xxiii. 34.

¹⁴ Luke xxiii. 43.

¹⁵ John xix. 28. Psalm lxix. 22.

¹⁶ John xix.

(b) That Jesus did not expire in consequence of exhausted nature, is manifest from the loud voice with which he yielded up the ghost. A circumstance particularly noticed by three of the Evangelists; and which more than any of the preceding miracles seems to have influenced the Centurion's exclamation.—This fact appears

Is any thing yet wanting to declare the greatness of the expiring Jesus?—Behold! the earth and the heaven, the dead and the living, unite to proclaim it!—*The veil*¹⁷ *of the Temple is rent in twain;—the earth*¹⁸ *quakes;—the everlasting rocks are riven;—the*¹⁹ *light which rules the day is quenched in darkness;—the dead awake from*²⁰ *their slumbers in the grave;—the people who came to insult return* *smiting their*²¹ *breasts;—and even they who slew him are forced to exclaim, Surely*²² *this man was the SON OF GOD.*

These were the miracles in the *natural* and *moral* world, which attested on Calvary the sufferings of THE GOD; and their evidence is certainly complete.

appears to be further established by the public declaration of the Saviour, not long before his Passion, viz. That *no man could take his life from him, but that he laid it down of himself.* JOHN X. 18.

¹⁷ Luke xxiii. 45.

¹⁸ Mat. xxvii. 51.

¹⁹ Mark xv. 33.

²⁰ Mat. xxvii. 52.

²¹ Luke xxiii. 48.

²² Mark xv. 39.

But

But the enemies of the Lord challenged him to a proof of his divinity still more decisive and unequivocal.—*Let ²³ Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.*—From what other cause than the want of power could a miracle be refused, the consequences of which were to be the entire conviction of the Jews, and the unanimous reception of the Messiah?

To this frivolous cavil the answer of the Christian is obvious and satisfactory.—Had this miracle been granted, all that the Saviour had before done, and all that he had before suffered, would have been of no effect.—The *expiation* would have been imperfect, and the œconomy of redemption, which required that the Christ *should die*, altogether disappointed.

Neither is there reason to conclude, that the consequences would have been such as have been stated.

²³ Mark xv. 32.

Every argument which could be addressed to the senses, had already ineffectually solicited the belief of the Jews.—They could not deny the mighty works which had been wrought among them *by the ²⁴finger of God*;—and even their priests were forced to allow, that He, who was now the object of their cruelty and their insults, had been able to *save ²⁵others*.—Was it then really a higher exertion of power to save himself? or was it a clearer indication of the Divinity to disengage himself from the cross, than to reanimate a man who had died by the violence of disease, who had lain four days in the grave, and in whom the ²⁶fermentation consequent to departure had manifestly taken place?—Certainly not.—And it is hardly to be conceived, that the unbelief which had resisted the testimony of the *latter* miracle, the reality ²⁷of which it pretended not to controvert, would have submitted to the evidence of the *former*.—

²⁴ Luke xi. 20.²⁵ Mark xv. 31.²⁶ John xi. 39.²⁷ John xi. 47.

So difficult to be overthrown are those prejudices, which, springing from religious errors, are inflamed by pride, and enforced by interest!

We must therefore allow, that *Christ crucified was the power of God*;—or we must reject the Evangelical History as unworthy of credit.

To invalidate the truth of any history, it is necessary to prove, either that the writer of it was ignorant of the facts which he assumed to relate; or that he was influenced to misrepresent them; or that the history in question is falsely ascribed to the author, whose name it bears;—or, if it be not wholly a forgery, that, at least, it's integrity has been greatly corrupted by the practices of design, or by the errors of ignorance.

But the writers of the sacred history were all of them *contemporaries*, and some of them *eye-witnesses* of the facts

which they relate. To conceal, or to misrepresent, they were indeed influenced—strongly influenced by almost every motive of power to direct the human conduct.—But not to conceal, or to misrepresent in favour of their master's cause; from the support of which they had every thing in this world to *fear*, and nothing to *hope*. That the Gospels are ascribed to their proper authors, and are possessed by us in a state of purity, may be proved from the peculiar jealousy with which it is well known that the primitive church guarded the canon of its scriptures; from the custom of publicly reciting and commenting upon the sacred records, which prevailed from the first institution of Christianity:—from the numerous translations of them into various languages, propagated rapidly even in the apostolical age, and, in part, handed down to ours;—from the assent of the earliest hereticks, to whose cause these writings were adversarious; and, lastly, from the concurrent force of a long chain of written evidence

dence, which extends from the conclusion of the first century;—to which it is linked by contemporaries (c) and disciples of the Apostles.

To these external proofs of authenticity, more numerous, and of greater weight than any which other writings can boast, may be added many internal characters of truth, which alone would be sufficient to establish the genuineness of the Gospels beyond the malice of suspicion.—Of these I shall suggest only two; that wonderful simplicity of style, which, disdaining the embellishments of artificial composition relies altogether on the bulk and dignity of it's subject; and that superior impartiality of relation, which is ne-

(c) In the *genuine* remains of the apostolical Fathers, as they are usually called, who occupy the interval between the decease of the apostles and Justin Martyr, we find abundant evidence of the authenticity and purity of the evangelical writings. On this subject, as indeed on every other of which he treats, Dr. Jortin is worthy of particular attention.—See Remarks on Eccl. Hist. vol. 1. p. 35.

ver hurried by provocation into acrimony, nor seduced by affection into panegyric; which never palliates the errors of the disciple, nor conceals the human weaknesses of the master.

The records, then, of our Lord's passion, being authentic, we may confidently assert, that in his lowest humiliation the Divinity was eminent and splendid.

But there is another circumstance, not within the limits of the Gospel narration, which, if possible, still more loudly proclaims, that *Christ crucified was the power of God*. Not degraded by the apparent ignominy of his punishment, he rises from it to glory and dominion.

A few days before he is betrayed, the Saviour illustrates the consequence of his approaching fate, by the instance of a grain of corn; which falling ^{as} into the

^{as} John xiii. 24.

ground,

ground, and there experiencing a change somewhat analogous to that which is wrought in the animal body by death, then first becomes productive, and shoots up into increase.

The illustration was clear and happy.—But the Lord condescends to bring his meaning more directly to the apprehension of the multitude, by telling them, *that when he was lifted up from ²⁹ the earth* (alluding to the manner of his death) *he would draw all men unto him.*—To consider the accomplishment of this prediction, must shock the most resolute infidelity.

Within the space of a few years, before that generation which saw *the Prince of ³⁰ life* perish like a malefactor was extinct—the son of man ³¹ was seen by the faithful coming in power to execute fig-

²⁹ John xii. 32.

³⁰ Acts iii. 15.

³¹ Matt. xxiv. 30.

nal justice on his murderers, by the entire overthrow of their civil and religious polity. His Gospel had already, by the ministry of a few *unlearned and* ³³ *ignorant men*, pervaded the wide circuit of the Roman world. The *whole mass indeed was not yet* ³³ *leavened*; but the ferment was working in its heart, and gradually extending the melioration to the extremities. Though at the first, *not many* ³⁴ *wise, not many mighty, not many noble, were called*, yet the DIVINE EFFICACY soon spread itself through all ranks, and seized upon the noble, the mighty and the wise. As God had chosen *the weak* ³⁵ *things of the world to confound the things which were mighty*—in opposition to the splendid subtleties of philosophy; to the interested exertions of a powerful priesthood;—to the violence of a jealous and strong government;—and, above all, to the darling vices, and the long-indul-

³³ Acts iv. 13.

³³ Matt. xiii. 33.

³⁴ 1 Cor. i. 26.

³⁵ 1 Cor. i. 27.

ged depravity of the human heart, this despised, this hated, this defamed (*d*) and persecuted religion of Jesus, won its way with silent, but with rapid and irresistible progression. In vain did the ³⁶ rulers of the earth take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. The King established on Sion marched in triumph from the provinces to the capital; from the camp to the senate; and from the senate to the throne. The instrument of servile torture on which he had been condemned to expire, was seen to direct the motions of armies; to adorn the palace of the Cæsars, and at length to supplant the golden victory in the senate-house of Rome.

(*d*) Quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat, &c.—*exitiabilis superstitio*, &c.—haud perinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. TACIT.—Afflicti suppliciiis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novæ et maleficæ, &c. SUET.

³⁶ Psalm ii. 2.

The

The revolution is truly wonderful, and must forcibly arrest the lightest and most inconsiderate mind.

In the course of a few centuries, the MAN OF SORROWS ³⁷ *despised and rejected* by the *Jews*, insulted and crucified by the *Gentiles*, was firmly seated in his spiritual dominion, and grasped a sceptre which extended to the ³⁸ *uttermost parts of the Earth*.—*Kings came to the* ³⁹ *brightness of his rising*; and from the extremities of the east to those of the west, every knee bent in homage to the name of JESUS.

If it be objected, that this Spiritual Kingdom was nothing more with relation to its head, than *that life in others breath*, which has frequently been the earthly portion after their decease of illustrious mortals; and that the *man* was crucified, whilst only the *name* was enthroned.—

³⁷ Isai. liii. 3.

³⁸ Psalm ii. 8.

³⁹ Isai. lx. 3.

⁴⁰ 2 Cor. x. 4.

We

We answer, that when his standard was first raised, the Lord was sensibly present with his Disciples in spirit and in power, that he furnished those *weapons which were⁴⁰ mighty to the pulling down of strong holds*; and actually led on his followers to the conquest of the world.—That when his presence, on the decided victory of his religion over paganism, ceased to be attested by miracles, it continued to be attested by his *providence*, and that by the protection of his church he still speaks as distinctly to the reason, as by the raising of it he formerly did to the senses.—That should these assertions be incapable of proof; (and they are capable of the strongest,) our argument would by no means be lost:—its object not being to propose in the spiritual empire of our Lord upon earth a compensation for his sufferings; but in the conversion of the hearts of men, to establish such a signal exertion of the Divinity as was sufficient to demonstrate *Christ crucified to be the power of God.*

⁴⁰ 2 Cor. x. 4:

Within the compass of a pulpit discourse it is impossible to croud all the arguments of which my subject will admit; or even to give their proper force to those which I have been able to adduce.—I must content myself therefore with just sketching an outline for your own reflection to fill up, and your own reading to enlarge.

What has been advanced, however will authorize us to say to the unbeliever;—If you are still blind to those manifestations of the Divinity, which compell us with the Apostle to acknowledge the crucified man *Christ Jesus to be the power of God*, your blindness is the blindness of prejudice and of obstinacy. Can you withhold your assent from the facts which we have related?—If you can, you will surpass in ability the most redoubted of the first adversaries of the Gospel.—At a much remoter period, and consequently with very inferior means of knowledge, you will triumph over imposture, which has successfully

fully defied the inveteracy of the Jew, and the sagacity of the Greek.—Neither the one nor the other pretended to controvert the existence of those miracles, which distinguished the life and death of JESUS. But what they could not controvert, as resting on the largest body of human testimony which ever strengthened the attestation of facts, they preverfely attributed to the operation of magick.—In this instance indeed of their malice, the difference of the times in which you live will not permit you to follow them.—In *their* days Christianity was imperfectly seen through a dim, or a discolouring medium. It was either covered with the darkness of persecution; or, just emerging from the cloud of its difficulties, was grossly sullied by the human passions of its professors.—But in *yours* it is fully unveiled, and blazes forth in all the ⁴¹ *beauty of holiness*. All its glorious tendencies to reform, to enlighten, and to comfort;—all its bright

⁴¹ 1 Chron. xvi. 29.

train of virtues, so fitted to dwell upon Earth, yet with their steps directed to Heaven, are now completely displayed; and acknowledged by the gratitude of the world.—To ascribe, therefore, its external evidences to the agency of an evil spirit would in this age argue the extreme of madness, rather than of malice.—

You must either then, with a boldness and success unknown to ancient infidelity, overthrow the miracles of Gospel history; or you must receive the truth of that religion, which they so effectually authenticate.

No—eluding the alternative you affect to take up the argument on higher grounds. You assert that the whole scheme of Christian Redemption so absolutely contradicts the suggestions of your reason, that no weight of external testimony can force it on your belief. Witnesses, in opposition to the strongest current of motives, may lie;

lie; and miracles of the most unsuspicious character may be forged:—though the falsehood cannot be traced, and the forgery should baffle detection.—But any supposition is to be admitted in preference to the absurdity on which the Christian Theology is founded.—That justice should be propitiated by the sufferings of the innocent;—that the son of the ETERNAL FATHER should descend to bear the punishment of our offences on the cross, is to your conviction *foolishness*.—But to ours it is *wisdom*, nay supreme wisdom, *the wisdom of God*. —

And this is the second assertion of the text.

But having already, my Brethren, trespassed largely on your attentions, I will reserve this view of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ for the discussion of the evening's discourse. At present only follow me with audience whilst I offer a few

re-

reflections, suggested by the subject of the preceding examination.

God forbid ⁴² that we should glory save in the CROSS of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

For in no other object, my Brethren, can man glory, without folly and without crime.

Are you distinguished by the goods of fortune, or of nature in that small circle of society which is occupied by your action or your name?—Remember that your advantages proceed from the same GREAT AND GOOD BEING who, for purposes of wisdom, and of righteousness, withholds them from those who are around you:—that to these advantages are annexed higher duties and stricter obligations;—that the longest existence of human enjoyment is—a moment;—that the firmest of human tenures is insecurity—and that

⁴² 1 Gal. vi. 14.

any one of the thousand ministers of the Divine Justice, which are perpetually walking ⁴³ in darkness over the earth to chastise the presumption of man, may in an instant tear from you those distinctions on which you fondly rely :—may humble your riches into poverty, your power into dependence, your health into disease, or the vigour of your intellect into infirmity, With these truths settled in your mind, can you so affront your own reason ;—can you offer such outrage to your degraded neighbour, and your insulted God, as to glory in what is yours by permission only and upon trust ;—a fugitive and uncertain, an unaccountable and dangerous superiority ? No—as to *rejoice* ⁴⁴ in hope is the piety of depression, to ⁴⁵ *rejoice with trembling* is the wisdom of pre-eminence.

But the *pride which was not made for* MAN, becometh well the CHRISTIAN.

43 Psalm ix. 6.

44 Rom. xii. 12.

45 Psalm ii. 11.

I

Who

Who art thou, on whom the hand of this world lies heavy? Who, hungry and naked, destitute and despised, seemest to have wrung out the dregs of that cup which is mingled by the Almighty in his displeasure?—Look at that cross!—survey that agonizing form which is stretched upon it!—attend to that cry of departure at which the earth is shaken, and the Heavens are darkened;—it is the punishment of HIM who ⁴⁶ was holy, harmless, undefiled, which is before thee—it is the power of God, whose mortal conflict has thrown nature into convulsions.

Askest thou the meaning of the dreadful mystery?—What mighty cause could make him ⁴⁷ to be sin, who knew no sin?—What exalted object could claim such suffering condescension from the brightness ⁴⁸ of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person.—Listen, thou man of worldly wretchedness!—The meaning

⁴⁶ Hebr. vii. 26.

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁴⁸ Hebr. i. 3.

of the dreadful mystery,—that mighty cause, and that exalted object, are in THYSELF.—Angels fell—and *there was* ⁴⁹ *no intercessor*.—But for thy transgressions the Son of the living God becomes a sacrifice and to be the Captain of thy salvation, submits ⁵⁰ to be made perfect by sufferings.—Attend to the ennobling revelation!—in conscious dignity raise thy head, however loaded with the wrongs of life, and glory in the cross of Christ.

Yes, my beloved, in all the real grandeur of man, this brother ⁵¹ of low degree, this outcast of the people, is equal with the lords of the earth.—Christ ⁵² gave himself a ransom for all.

But when we reflect on this proud occasion of triumph, let us not forget that to the righteous only it can justly belong.

⁴⁹ Isai. lix. 16.

⁵⁰ Hebr. ii. 10.

⁵¹ James i. 9.

⁵² 1 Tim. ii. 6.

When the ⁵³ *small and the great stand before God*, will it avail us that we plead,—Lord! we have entered by baptism into thy Church;—*we have gloried in thy Cross*; we have confessed thee to be *the power of God*?—Will it not be asked,—If ye entered by baptism into my Church, why did ye neglect the engagement of that solemn initiation?—If ye gloried in my cross, why did ye not receive the instruction which it offered, and *love one another even as* ⁵⁴ *I loved you*?—If ye confessed me to be the power of God, why did ye mock me with the devotion of the lips, and not honour me with that of the heart?

In this awful crisis, that we may not hear those dreadful words,—*I know you not, depart* ⁵⁵ *from me ye wicked*;—let us, while we exult in that importance of our nature, which could obtain such high regard, be humbled, and struck with horror

⁵³ Rev. xx. 12.

⁵⁴ John xiii. 34.

⁵⁵ Matt. vii. 23.

at that enormity of sin, which could exact such mighty expiation.

Neither let us be deceived.—The efficacy of the Cross of Christ, prevailing as it is, extends not to the transgressions of the future; and, to be brought home to ourselves, must be fought with that *godly sorrow* ⁵⁶ *which worketh repentance*.

Sensible of this important truth, let us not delay to seize the hope, which is now within our reach; nor fondly dream of a morrow, which to us may never exist.—When we give to procrastination the moments of this invaluable *day of salvation*, let us reflect, and let the reflection strike upon our hearts, that each of these moments may be charged with the fate of eternity.

Let us then, CHRISTIANS, this instant, *arise* ⁵⁷ *and go unto our Father*;—in deep

⁵⁶ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

⁵⁷ Luke xv. 18.

contrition let us seek him at the HOLY TABLE: there let us pour out our wretchedness before him.—There let us adjure him by the BLOOD OF OUR REDEEMER, to pardon all that is past, and through the mediation of our GREAT HIGH PRIEST to sanctify all that is to come.—Thus sought he will be found;—thus entreated he will hear.—For our sins he will accept the atonement of the CROSS; and to our infirmities he will indulge, at the suit of our INTERCESSOR, the assistance of his HOLY SPIRIT.—And then;—with minds rescued from the conscience of guilt, and with endeavours led on from victory to victory, we shall *run*⁵⁸ *with increasing confidence the race that is set before us*, possessed of all the limited present, and with hopes expatiating in the boundless future, *in all*⁵⁹ *things both of life and of death more than conquerors*, we shall feel, and

⁵⁸ Heb. xii. 1.⁵⁹ Rom. viii. 37.

gratefully acknowledge, that, to save, to strengthen, to comfort, and to bless us—
CHRIST CRUCIFIED IS THE POWER OF GOD.

2 E R M O N V.

On the ATONEMENT of CHRIST.

AND SER.

On the morning of the 17th, we were informed that the ship had been sighted in the harbor of the island of St. John, and that the crew were all well. We then proceeded to the island, and found that the ship was indeed there, and that the crew were all well. We then proceeded to the island, and found that the ship was indeed there, and that the crew were all well.

The subject of our attention was also
a man with eyes
fascinating

S E R M O N V.

On the ATONEMENT of CHRIST.

1 Cor I. 23, 24.

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED, UNTO THE JEWS A STUMBLING BLOCK; AND UNTO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS; BUT UNTO THEM WHICH ARE CALLED, BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS, CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD.

IN the morning's discourse, my Brethren, we considered in the passion of Jesus those striking circumstances which proved him to be *the power of God*.

The subject of our attention was astonishing and sublime.—A man with eyes
searching

searching the depths of the heart ;—innocent yet punished ;—unoffending, yet persecuted with hatred ; the disposer of his own fate, yet submitting to the lowest abasement, and to the sharpest anguish ;—above the littleness of pride and the frailty of resentment, *reviled¹ but reviling not again, suffering but not threatening* ; in this moment entreating like a suppliant for the ignorance of man ;—in the next, like a sovereign, granting pardon to his repentance :—and throwing over the whole dark scene of humiliation and punishment, a blaze of glory, sufficient to disclose the divinity of the sufferer.

To the degradation and death succeeded the triumph and dominion of Jesus.

We beheld *the stone cut out without hands breaking to pieces the image of worldly strength, becoming a great mountain, and fil-*

¹ 1 Pct. ii. 23.

² Dan. ii. 34.

ling the earth.—And him who was³ numbered with the transgressors on Calvary, possessed of that Kingdom which God set up, and which shall never be destroyed.

In support of this wonderful narration, we have authority of the least questionable nature.

1. That of contemporaries, and eye-witnesses; who suffered for the testimony they bore, and to whom silence had been temporal safety, and misrepresentation temporal advantage.

2. That of a long series of writers, which immediately succeeding to the times of these first witnesses, confirmed their testimony, by establishing the unsullied integrity of their character,—and of their works.

3. That of the primitive Church; which, raised by these first witnesses, protected

³ Isai. liii. 12.

⁴ Dan. ii. 44.

their writings with the most jealous attention, and provided for their preservation and purity by dispersing them in various languages, and by enjoining the frequent and publick recital of them.

4. That of universal history—Christian and Pagan, ancient and modern, which attests the providential growth of the Gospel kingdom, and the revolution it effected on the earth.

To this strong phalanx of authority, enforced by the majesty of wide-reigning and long settled opinion, the unbeliever can make feeble opposition. Unequal to the contest of the open field, he aims the wound of insinuation; or skirmishes with the light insults of ridicule.—If he detect among the confederate bands a weaker individual obtruded injudiciously into the ranks, he singles out the object of his attack,—and proud of the contemptible ad-

vantage,

vantage, triumphs for a victory which he has not atchieved.

Neither are these all the artifices by which he endeavours to compensate his want of force.

At one time—assuming the subtlety of *metaphysical* (a) *disquisition*, he descants on the imperfect, and fallacious notices of the senses; on the creative powers of excited passion; on the propriety of balancing improbabilities; and then determining any suspension or change of the laws of nature (which he considers as something else than the will of God,) to be more improbable than the fallibility of any human testimony, concludes, that no authority is sufficient to establish a miracle.

At another time, armed for the accomplishment of his design with the advan-

(a) Hume on Miracles, Nat. Rel. &c.

tages of *historic narration*;—on the many instances of priestly imposition and of popular credulity with which the annals of universal theology are disgraced, he enlarges with exultation; and investing the mock miracles of false, or corrupted religions in evidence and credit not their own, from the acknowledged knavery of *these* he wishes to infer the latent knavery of all.—Or affecting with impartial investigation, to trace stupendous (*b*) effects to common causes he endeavours to withdraw the EXERTED DEITY from our sight.—Where there is too little for his purpose, he creates; where too much, he annihilates;—and over the whole surface of his falsehood he spins a thin web of truth, ornamented with the sparkle of an artificial and high-wrought style.

To such disingenuous expedients are men driven by their enmity to that sys-

(*b*) History of the Decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

TEM OF HOLINESS, who carries in *her* right hand eternity of days, and in *her* left the riches and honours of Heaven!

But from whence this unnatural aversion to objects the most delightful to the human heart?—From whence these strenuous efforts; the end of which must be temporal despair, and may be everlasting ruin? Whatever motives we may be inclined to suggest for conduct, respecting themselves so irrational, and respecting others so unjustifiable;—the patrons of infidelity will assure us, it is by a zeal for truth, and a detestation of falsehood, that they are actuated.—That the attempt to impose on their belief the sufferings of an incarnate God for the offences of a creature, filling so narrow a sphere of consequence in the creation as man, is an insult on reason; which the sons of reason cannot but resent.

5 Prov. iii. 16.

Here

Here then we meet, and while we refuse to admit the *all-sufficiency* of reason, on this occasion we will consent to bring the whole merits of our cause before her respectable though fallible tribunal.

To our adversaries, *Christ crucified is foolishness*; to us he is *the wisdom of God*.— And by the wisdom of God we mean not anything distinct in kind from the wisdom of man, but superior only in degree.

In the scripture-account of the introduction of sin, there is nothing which strikes us as improbable. Man placed originally by his Creator in a state of much happiness, and destined for more, was, as all rational creatures necessarily must be, subjected to law; or the observance of certain conditions was enjoined to him, as the means of securing the present, and of entitling himself to the future favour of his God. But what conditions were adapted to his character and circumstances?

ces? He came indeed from the hand of his Maker with large capacities of intellectual and moral perception,—but with these capacities, not filled by experience, nor occupied by many objects, he was yet in the childhood of intellectual and moral agency.—To his understanding, whatever involved the abstract idea of spiritual obedience was ill-accommodated;—and to his situation, enriched by the prodigality of primeval nature, and connected with only one of his own species, to whom he was bound by the closest of ties, any infringement of the *ethic* duties was nearly impossible.

The terms therefore of his obedience were settled by GOODNESS and WISDOM. Simple and obvious to the senses; easy to be observed; yet liable to be broken.—*Thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

On

On the transgression of the command, the penalty was incurred, and the offender, Man, according to the established order of nature, *begat a son in his own likeness, after his image*; and not as he himself was created, *in the likeness and after the image of GOD.*

This is the account given by the scriptures of the origin of sin;—and it is stamp'd with the venerable simplicity of truth.—If however it should be rejected by our adversaries, let them substitute in its place, any other which the wantonness of hypothesis may suggest.—All on which we insist, as necessary to our argument, is the existence and the extended corruption of sin; from the taint of which no individual of the human race is absolutely free. And these melancholy facts are too evident to be denied.

But if it be certain that sin exists, it is equally certain that it must be displeasing

K

to

to that presiding Being, whose holiness and justice are as deeply impressed upon his works, as his wisdom, and his power. For the tendency of sin to disarrange that order, and, to the extent of its influence, to break that harmony which he has established, is as evident as its existence. But as sin never can be an object of *approbation* with an HOLY GOD, so must it be an object of *punishment* with a JUST GOD.

THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE⁶ that inhabiteth Eternity, cannot, it is true, be touched with a feeling of resentment, or revenge.—God, as a spirit, must necessarily be without passions; and placed at an infinite distance above his creation, he must be infinitely raised above those competitions, which awaken them in subordinate creatures. But as the Governor of the world—for the vindication of his justice, and the general preservation of his

⁶ Isai. lvii. 15.

laws, he must correct the violation of order.

Imprisoned in matter, our limited faculties can extend to a very small portion of that system, which, as it is formed by OMNIPOTENCE, may occupy INFINITY. To comprehend all the relations and dependencies of this stupendous system must exceed the capacity of any finite intelligence. But, from what we know of it, we may infer that intimacy of connexion between its parts, which might render the impunity of sin, in one of them, the encouragement of it in another—and thus, if the disorder must eventually be chastised, what *here* is partial indulgence, may *there* be partial severity.

But not to rest on conjecture, however probable—we are assured by what we see of the nature and consequences of sin, that it behoved the MONARCH OF THE UNIVERSE to manifest his justice in the punishment of it—but HE, whom we are

mitted to call OUR FATHER, was moved with pity for his offspring.—He wished to separate the *sinner* from the *sin*.—To admit the *former* on certain conditions into his favour, whilst, by his *expressed* detestation of the *latter*, the holiness, and the dignity of his government were asserted.—How then could these ends be effected?—By what method could he reconcile those jarring characters of the RIGHTEOUS MONARCH OF THE UNIVERSE, and the GRACIOUS FATHER OF MAN?—By no other, as far as we are (c) able to conceive, than by admitting in the place of the offender the substitution of some being, whose sufferings might declare the abhorrence of the Holy One to sin, and whose merit might effectually intercede

(c) The Apostles frequently declare that the Scheme of Man's redemption by the satisfaction of Christ was the effect of *divine love* and of *divine wisdom*; but they never assume to limit the mercy or the wisdom of God, by asserting that the *one* could not devise *other terms* on which sin might be pardoned; or that the *other* could not extend to it *unconditional* remission.

for

for the restoration of the offender to Grace.

But what being was suited to the mighty work?—*the whole race of ⁷ man was guilty before God*—and no individual of it had any thing to offer which was not already forfeited. The angelic body was sinless, but dependent. In one of its members, therefore, to engage on this occasion from the impulse of his own will, had been disrespect to his King.—To undertake the task in obedience to command had been nothing more than duty :—and in either case there would not have been that merit in the action, which was essential to its perfection.

That entire exemption from sin, which was obnoxious to no punishment—that degree of independence which brought with it the right of self-disposal—that exalted rank to which the condescension could not be enjoined; and which, by

the importance of the atonement evincing the enormity, and the danger of sin, would check the progress of its ravage, were the requisites for the awful and efficient substitution:—and in what glorious being could these requisites be found, but in *the WORD⁸ who was with GOD, and the WORD who was GOD?*

To what part therefore of this scheme can the most accurate reason object;—or the most sublime refuse to submit?

That sin cannot be expiated without suffering, personal or vicarious, is a truth in which mankind have unanimously concurred, as the bloody rites, common to all religions, sufficiently attest.

The institution of sacrifice was nearly coeval with the birth of sin; and that the author of it was God, is probable from reason, and evident from scripture—its establishment in the Jewish system

⁸ John i. 1.

was wisely adapted to the leading objects of that local and introductory dispensation—for it spoke solemnly to the senses of a gross people, that *the wages of sin are death*; and it pointed directly to that great propitiation by blood, with which the old covenant was to conclude, and the new to commence.

The blood of bulls, and of goats, however, could possess no virtue to take away sins; and must be indebted for its whole value to the immediate appointment, and the especial acceptance of God.—For, not to urge the inconsistency of supposing that the guilt of one nature can be expiated by the sufferings of another, the ends of punishment would be very inadequately attained by such an inferior substitution—asserting but feebly the dignity of the Almighty's government, it could enforce but partially and imperfectly the observation of his laws—from the poor it

⁹ Rom. vi. 23.

¹⁰ Heb. x. 4.

would almost withhold the prospect of pardon, while to the rich it would almost indulge a licentious impunity.

But the atonement of Christ made in the nature, which offended, whilst it vindicated the greatness of the Divine Majesty, operated equally and powerfully towards the preservation of the divine laws—and it was, therefore, received as satisfactory by the clemency of God.—With respect to the Saviour—to offer one mighty sacrifice, the prevalence of which should extend to the whole body of sin, and from the beginning to the end of time, was an object worthy of his HEAVENLY POWER.—To rescue a world of criminals from the punishment to which they were exposed, and to obtain for them the capacity of rewards, to which, even as innocent, they could not be entitled, was an object worthy of his HEAVENLY LOVE.

It

It may, however, still be urged, that the penalty annexed to guilt, could not in strictness be absolved by innocence; and that it was the actual punishment of the delinquent which was the demand of rigorous justice.

This must, in part, be allowed; and, although justice may with propriety be accounted satisfied, when the design of that punishment which it awards is fully accomplished; we have already admitted that the substitution of Christ, however admirably adapted to the glorious ends which it had in view, was crowned with its full and final efficacy only by the accepting mercy of God.

To bring this part of the argument closer to our sight;—let us suppose that an innocent man offers to suffer for his guilty friend,—if he were the independent arbiter of his own fate;—if the force of the example would be equally powerful;—if the preservation of the public good would

would be equally secured by his punishment;—and if the magistrate were himself uncontrolled, and unaccountable, the offer, I affirm, might be accepted, and the laws, unacquainted with revenge, and indifferent to the sufferings of the individual, would not be injured by the acceptance. But not to enquire whether ANY of the ends of punishment would in such a case be answered.—Man is not the independent arbiter of his own fate—his life belongs to his family, to his friends, to his country, to his God.—To part with it therefore on any motion of his own, would be an invasion of the rights of others; and a breach of the general order—the offer, then, which the offerer had no right to make, the magistrate could have no right to accept,—neither could the magistrate himself, controlled and accountable, on any supposition, admit of the proffered exchange.

But

But to apply this reasoning to the subject it is meant to illustrate,

The laws of God are violated; and the Son of God offers himself to the punishment incurred by the violators.—The offerer in this instance is the member of no system, and is amenable to no laws but those of the Godhead, or which are the same, those of his own infinite nature:—his offer then thus rightly made may rightfully be accepted; and the supreme Magistrate far removed from the weakness of passion which disorders the administration of human laws, is sensible, that by his acceptance of it, all the objects of substantial justice will effectually be gained.

We have now considered at some length the Christian doctrine of atonement, and have seen that in perfect conformity to all his acknowledged attributes, God might permit *the just* ¹ *to suffer for the unjust.*

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

But

But can we believe that *He who is before all things, and by whom all things consist*, ¹² for a creature so subordinate as man would submit to the evil of pain, and the humiliation of death?

This objection, my Brethren, is frequently urged by the same description of persons, who are so forward to erect themselves into a tribunal qualified to determine on the highest causes,—with an inconsistency worthy of remark, they who on some occasions can diminish human nature to a PIGMY, on others enlarge human reason to a GIANT capable of warring against Heaven,—but the truth is in neither of these extremes.

Whilst with a feeling of conscious imperfection we confess the frailty and ignorance of man in his present probationary state, let us not hesitate to assert the eminence of his rank in the creation;—let us with becoming boldness affirm, that

¹² Col. i. 17.

though

though sullied, and defaced, the image of the Maker is yet deeply stamp'd upon the human gold;—that man is an intellectual and moral agent;—and that however various in *degree* may be the INTELLECTUAL and MORAL, in *kind* even omnipotence itself (if it may be lawful so to speak) cannot form any thing of higher excellence.

If our enemies, therefore, are not so unphilosophic as to draw their notions of man's littleness from that of his bulk, and not to know that to the INHABITER OF INFINITY, an atom and a world are of equal dimensions, they must allow that he is not of such small importance among the works of God, but that his eternal happiness and misery might be objects of a size to engage the interference of the most elevated nature. That the great work of human redemption could not be accomplished without that supreme interference, and that it was the worthy offspring

spring of the God of power and of love, has already been sufficiently determined.

We may now, then, challenge our adversaries, to point out in this scheme of the œconomy of redemption, those difficulties which are irreconcilable to reason.

We will admit indeed, that in the progress of presumptuous investigation, we might find the idleness of our curiosity repressed by the distance and the sublimity of the object; for, *can we by searching find¹³ out God?—Can we find out the Almighty to perfection?—He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.* But if there be depths in the great mystery¹⁴ of Godliness, not to be fathomed by the short line of our understandings, we may confidently affirm, that the degree of knowledge necessary to our present state is indulged; and that we see enough of the DIVINE PLAN to be assured

¹³ Job xi. 7.

¹⁴ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

that

that *Mercy*¹⁵ and *Truth* have met together in it.

There is yet another and a more obvious view of the subject, which likewise will demonstrate in *Christ crucified the wisdom of God*.—My time indeed will permit me to shew it only in an imperfect and cursory manner.

By the accepted substitution we were exempted from punishment, we were made capable of reward, and the gates of Heaven were thrown open to our endeavours and repentance: but it was proper to make us in some degree worthy of that reward; to instruct those endeavours and to exite that repentance. *Christ therefore suffered not only for a satisfaction for sin, but likewise to leave us an example, that we might follow*¹⁶ *his steps*.

Suited to this important end were all the circumstances of his manifestation on

¹⁵ Psalm lxxxv. 10.

¹⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 21;

earth

earth;—to the conveniencies of affluence and rank, he preferred that condition which would give the most forcible lesson of example.—He rejected the pageantry and glitter of the world, for these were nothing to the great objects of man. To wean us from our avarice, *He had not where¹⁷ to lay his head.*—To humble our ambition *He made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form¹⁸ of a servant,*—to correct our sensuality, and inculcate *the lightness¹⁹ of those afflictions which are but for a moment,* He concluded a course of continued hardship with sufferings, and a painful death.—Ought we to be merciful, just, and holy?—Yes,—THE LIFE OF JESUS tells us that we ought.—Must we be patient under injuries, forgiving to our enemies, and resigned to the severest will of our God?—Yes,—THE DEATH OF JESUS speaks to the heart, that we must.

¹⁷ Matt. viii. 20.

¹⁸ Phil. ii. 7.

¹⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

And

And is not all which has been advanced (we may demand of the unbeliever) sufficient to make you perceive in *Christ crucified the wisdom of God?*—If it be not—cease to vaunt of the enlargement of your faculties, or of the liberality of your mind—by reasonings similar to those which have been now offered, the most refined, the most acute, and the most sublime of human intelligencies, (*d*) have been influenced to believe and adore. If to you the same arguments carry not with them

(*d*) The argument in favour of revealed religion, drawn from its reception, by the greatest men of all ages, since it was first promulged, is certainly of no trifling importance. Those reasons, and that evidence which have satisfied the most comprehensive and investigating minds, cannot be very light, or very defective. In every country where the Gospel has been propagated, the MASTER SPIRITS have been Christians. In our own Island, not to mention the many Divines of our Church, some of whom, for erudition and ability, have never been exceeded, and rarely equalled, all the great luminaries of science, with scarcely one exception, have been believers. The great wits alluded to above are Addison, Locke and Newton—men whose christianity was as undoubted as their talents.

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the same efficacy, forbear to glory in the shameful distinction.—Dare not to indulge an ideal superiority over those whose wit has ascertained the boundaries of taste, or whose genius extended those of science;—whose penetration has pervaded the intellectual labyrinth—or investigated the laws by which the universe is governed.—No—if your mind be impervious to the conviction, its passions are guarded by the mercenaries of passion.—It is its natural, or artificial barrenness, which defends it from the armies of truth—but hasten to solicit that *yoke which is easy*²⁰—to welcome that subjection which will make you *fellow-citizen*²¹ *with the saints*.—By honest exertion seek to disengage yourself from those *imperious guards*; and by ingenuous cultivation to destroy that *opprobrious defence*.—The issue of your labours will be ample reward.—God will send a blessing on their sincerity—and you will then experience a relish

²⁰ Matt. xi. 30²¹ Ephes. ii. 19.

of life, a contempt of death, a dilation of thought, and a glow of soul which your frivolous pleasures, your boasted honour, your vain philosophy, and the exertions of your *fictitious* or *constitutional* virtues never could confer.

Let us, my beloved Brethren, who profess ourselves *the servants of the Lord*—look unto ²² *Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame*—and what was the joy which was set before him?—arrayed in the plenitude of power—exalted on the ETERNAL'S THRONE—involved in the blaze of his own perfections—was not the measure of his fruition full?—could any joy be set before Him of which he was not already possessed?—Yes, BLESSED LORD!—arrayed in the plenitude of power;—exalted on the ETERNAL'S THRONE, involved in the BLAZE OF THY OWN PER-

²² Heb. xii. 2.

FECTIONS—THOU didst look down upon fallen man.—COMPASSION forced the citadel of THY GREATNESS—the measure of thy fruition was not full:—and HEAVENLY LOVE set before thee yet one joy of which THOU wast not already possessed—the joy of raising fallen man;—of washing the criminal in thy own blood; of presenting him spotless before the throne of RECONCILED JUSTICE.—When THOU sawest that *in burnt offerings and sacrifices* ²³ *for sin* THY FATHER *had no pleasure*, THOU didst say, *Lo I come!*—the GLORIES of the GODHEAD didst THOU lay aside!—the weaknesses—the miseries—all but the sinfulness of our nature didst THOU assume! THOU didst take on THEE *the chastisement of* ²⁴ *our peace!*—*for us* THOU wast made a curse ²⁵—*for us the terrors of God* ²⁶ *did set themselves in array against* THEE; and *the arrows of the Almighty* ²⁷ *were drunk with* THY HOLY BLOOD.

²³ Heb. x. 6.²⁴ Isai. liii. 5.²⁵ Gal. iii. 13.²⁶ Job vi. 4.²⁷ Deut. xxxii. 4.

Oh!

Oh! consider, Brethren! the *force* and the *object* of this *Heavenly Love*;—and while ye admire, forbear to disappoint it!

When the eye of devotion fastens on the sufferings of the *Redeemer*:—when it beholds his meekness exposed to brutality and insult;—his humanity fainting under the scourge, and bleeding on the cross;—his innocence betrayed and given up to a shameful death; when these affecting images are impressed upon the heart,—oh reflect on that end for which his meekness was exposed;—for which his humanity fainted and bled; for which his innocence was betrayed and given up to a shameful death.—The LORD requires not your sympathy for his sufferings;—He asks only that you would not wrong them of their reward.—*Weep*²⁸ *not for him* (he prays you)—*but for yourselves!*—Are you conscious of *presumptuous* sins?—bewail them in the bitterness of repentance.

²⁸ Luke xxiii. 28.

Are you happily conscious only of *infirmities*?—Shed for them the silent tear, which solicits support.

Nor confine your sorrows to yourselves—weep for the danger of an unthinking, and dissipated age;—and, above all, weep for those (and oh! may your tears call down the Spirit of Grace to interpose and save them!) *who tread under foot the SON OF GOD,* ²⁹ *and count the blood of the Covenant wherewith they are sanctified an unholy thing.*

With feelings thus awakened, and thus directed—retire!—and, in the secrecy of your chambers, give the awfulness of this day to the fervour of a grateful devotion!—and then—with hearts overflowing with the *love of God, and of Man*, repair to your several stations in active life, to exercise a religion fruitful of virtues;—of *temperance, justice, mercy and charity.*—And thus endeavour to discharge some

²⁹ Heb. x. 29.

part, however small, of your debt of love to HIM, *who bought*³⁰ *you with a price—even to the LAMB*³¹ *that was slain; who is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.—Amen.*

³⁰ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

³¹ Rev. v. 12.

S E R M O N VI.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

REV. II. 8.

THE FIRST AND THE LAST WHICH WAS
DEAD AND IS ALIVE.

WE lately met to commemorate the sufferings and death of our LORD CHRIST—the *First and the Last*.—We were present by faith when that exalted Being, in his assumed humanity, was betrayed and insulted:—was torn with scourges, and nailed upon the cross.—Our ears heard his last groan; our eyes beheld

beheld when he bowed the head, and yielded up the Ghost. On one side of the instrument of shameful punishment, we saw *the power of God*—and on the other that *wisdom*¹ *who was with the Lord when he prepared the Heavens, and set a compass upon the face of the deep.*

We are now assembled (a) for a spectacle of a very different aspect—the hour of suffering is over; and that of triumph is commenced. Sin and the grave have had their dues:—the great atonement is complete. *Eternal Justice* is reconciled. *Mercy and truth have met together, and Righteousness hath looked down from Heaven—the Prince of*² *Life—whom by wicked hands*³ *they slew—they have taken from the tree and laid in a sepulchre.* Will you repair thither with Mary to weep over his body? Your piety is vain: *He is not*

¹ Prov. viii. 27.

(a) Preached on Easter-Day.

² Acts iii. 15.

³ Acts ii. 23.

there

there. He is risen—He was dead and is alive.

Follow me, I beseech you, Brethren, with your attention, while I consider the great subject at present before us, as it forms the basis of the Christian faith; and as it gives us the assurance of our own victory over death—with the *former* view of our Lord's resurrection will be connected a slight sketch of the evidence on which it rests; and, from the *latter*, consequences of the most awful importance to our conduct will be deduced.

The whole period of the Saviour's Ministry was distinguished by miracles; but, for the full authentication of his mission, he refuses to rest upon their testimony, convincing as it might appear.

In his answer to the enquiries of John, he appeals indeed to these works of power as adapted to satisfy the doubts of the enquirer; and to the *Baptist*, the discriminating

minating feature of their character was sufficient to point out the *Messiah*.

In the miracles of former ages there was frequently *something of passion*, and *much of severity*; but those of the blessed *Jesus* were unmingled and Godlike *beneficence*.---Persecuted and reviled, He summoned no beasts ⁴ from the forest to devour; He commissioned no leprosy ⁵ to taint; He called down no fire from Heaven ⁶ to consume ⁷;---rejected by the pride, and affronted by the vices of men, *He went about doing good*; to disease bringing health, and to penitence extending pardon. Wherever he turned *the blind received* ⁸ *their sight*, *the lame walked*; *the lepers were cleansed*, *the deaf heard*, *the dead were raised up*, *the poor had the gospel preached to them*; and the wretch, stooping under conscious guilt, was erected by

⁴ 2 Kings ii. 24.

⁵ 2 Kings v. 27.

⁶ 2 Kings i. 10.

⁷ Numb. xvi. 15.

⁸ Matt. xi. 5.

those

those heavenly words, *Son, & be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

To the unprejudiced, then, and the enlightened, the works of Jesus clearly bespoke that HOLY ONE, whose benignity, equally with his power, was the subject of prophetic ¹⁰ annunciation;—but to the multitude, their language was neither so distinct, nor so full:—for, while to the perverted understandings, and the malignity of some, it evinced him the agent of the ¹¹ devil; to the ignorance of others it might proclaim him to be only a man favoured by God, as were the FOUNDER (b) and the RESTORER (c) of the law.

For the complete demonstration, therefore, of his superior nature, the Lord refers on public occasions to that evidence

⁹ Matt. ix. 2.

¹⁰ Isai. xxxv.

¹¹ Matt. ix. 34. xii. 24. Mark iii. 22.

John viii. 48.

(b) Moses.

(c) Elijah.

of power, which was to be supplied by his resurrection.

When the Scribes and the Pharisees solicited for a sign;—passing over in silence those wonders and those signs of which they had so long been the uncontroverted spectators, He declares, that *no sign shall be given to that evil and adulterous generation, but the sign of the prophet Jonas;—* a sign which He explains, by adding, *that as the prophet lay for three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the SON OF MAN be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

When pressed to justify the authority which by expelling from the temple the profanations of merchandize he had asserted,—his answer was to a similar effect, —*destroy ¹² this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;—*or, (to follow the sense and explanation of the context) with

¹² John ii. 19.

wicked and cruel hands I know that ye will destroy this body, the temple in which *the fullness*¹³ *of the Deity resides.*

—But on this consummation of your wickedness and cruelty, will be given that sign which ye now so importunately require;—for in three days the temple which ye have destroyed, shall again be reared by my power, and inhabited by my glory.

Nor could the Saviour refer to a proof more decisive of his Divinity.

As to suspend the laws by which nature is usually governed, must be an act of the same power which could ordain them, in every miracle, or partial suspension of those laws, the voice of God may be said to speak to the senses of man,—but in that favoured nation, which for wise and righteous ends the Deity was

¹³ Col. ii. 9.

pleased to separate to Himself, this voice had frequently been heard.

For the instruction or the reproof, the preservation or the punishment of his people, the Lord, at different periods from the days of Abraham to those of Malachi, had often *made bare his holy arm*. By the human instruments of the *Supreme Efficiency*, the world of wonders seemed to be occupied, and exhausted: each portion of material nature had in its turn submitted to the over-ruling energy. By a pause in gravitation the tides had ceased to flow, and the planets to travel in their orbs;—the commanded earth had opened her mouth,—the Heaven had darted obedient fire,—unconscious matter had been awakened into existence;—nay, by the re-animation of the dead, had been kindled into the bright activity of mind.

Was there yet a miracle unappropriated, (if I may so speak;) or which could bring the Divinity closer to mortal sight?

---there

—there was—and for our Lord it was reserved ;—after expiring by a violent death, to rise in accomplishment of his own prediction from the grave, and to restore his frame, was an instance of power unknown to the experience, and unrivalled by the wonders of any preceding age.

The resurrection, therefore, of JESUS, would demonstrate Him to be superior to the greatest of the prophets. But, if we reflect, that in this glorious miracle was involved a full confirmation of the Saviour's general truth, we must regard its testimony as extending to higher consequences.

In the discharge of his ministry it was necessary for the MESSIAH to assert the pre-eminence of his nature; and, consistently with its two-fold character, He asserts it with the humility proper to the human, yet with the dignity suited to the Divine. *Of himself he could do ¹⁴ nothing*; and

¹⁴ John v. 19.

He came only to do ¹⁵ the will of Him who sent Him, who was greater ¹⁶ than He—but He was the SON, nay, the ONLY BEGOTTEN ¹⁷ SON of GOD, —and He and his Father ¹⁸ were one. As the FATHER ¹⁹ had life in himself, so had He given to the SON to have life in himself; —and no man could take it from Him: but He ²⁰ had power to lay it down, and power to take it again.

These were the public declarations of Jesus, and their veracity was to be ascertained by the fact of his rising on the third day from the grave. For if He actually arose, it must be evident, either that by an inherent ENERGY OF GODHEAD communicated originally by the FATHER, He reassumed that body which for a short period He had laid aside; or that the HOLY GOD by raising up an impostor,

¹⁵ John v. 30.¹⁶ John xiv. 28.¹⁷ John iii. 16.¹⁸ John x. 30.¹⁹ John v. 26.²⁰ John x. 18.

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gave

gave his sanction to falsehood, and countenanced a system of imposition.

In the resurrection of our Lord, therefore, we have the full attestation of his Divinity, and consequently the proper foundation of our Christian Faith. For it is scarcely necessary to remark, that with the established DIVINITY of JESUS, the whole of his system is effectually ratified; his miracles and his doctrines, which otherwise would be little more than splendid fallacies, form parts of one structure, the unity of which is entire, and the strength not to be shaken. Implicitly relying on the promises of our Heavenly Master, we may at all times look up to Him for protection; and with the strictest propriety we may address Him in the few but pregnant words of the disciple Thomas, MY LORD ²¹ AND MY GOD!

It was with this sense of its importance that the resurrection was always regarded

²¹ John xx. 28.

by the Apostles:—witnesses as they were of their Lord's powerful works; of his unblemished purity; of his insight into the deepest retreats of thought,—their faith continued weak and unconfirmed,—yielding at intervals to the overbearing evidence, their doubts of his Divinity were ever ready to recur: and when they saw Him expire on the cross, they lamented the disappointment of their hopes, which *trusted that it had been He*²² *who should have redeemed Israel*: but no sooner was the fact of his resurrection completely ascertained, than every doubt was finally put to flight; their eyes were opened to the scriptures; and they beheld in their crucified Master, *the power of God; the First and the Last, who was dead, and is alive.*

With these holy persons, therefore, the belief of the resurrection was the belief of general Christianity:—in their discourses and their writings it is Christ *raised from the dead*²³ *whom they preach.*—

²² Luke xxiv. 21.²³ Acts ii. 24.

When the Holy Ghost strengthens their boldness for the execution of their ministry; it is the *witness* ²⁴ *of the resurrection which they give with great power.* When they are assembled to elect a successor to Judas, it is to ordain one who with them may be witness of the Lord's ²⁵ resurrection; and St. Paul expressly says, *if Christ be not risen* ²⁶ *then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain.*

To the acknowledged weight of this miracle, the strength of evidence on which it rests, is happily and *providentially* adapted.—Let us give it a short examination.

The same misconception of the scriptures, and attachment to the traditions of their elders, which had induced the Jews to expect a temporal Messiah, had prepossessed them with the persuasion of his earthly ²⁷ perpetuity. The predictions

²⁴ Acts iv. 33.

²⁵ Acts i. 22.

²⁶ Cor. xv. 14.

²⁷ John xii. 34.

there-

therefore of our Saviour, which respected his own death, and consequent resurrection, were even to his disciples, who had their share of the popular delusion, offensive ²⁸ or unintelligible ²⁹; his crucifixion, in accomplishment of what he had foretold, served rather to unsettle their faith, than to remove their prejudices. Astonished that *a Prophet* ³⁰ *so mighty in deed and word before God*, should be exposed to such an unworthy fate, they seem to have regarded the glorious life of their Master as little more than a waste of holiness and power.—For *as yet they knew not the scripture* ³¹ *that He must rise again from the dead.*

But the jealousy of the Lord's enemies appears to have sharpened their apprehension. Struck with His public declarations, they considered them as entitled

²⁸ Matt. xvi. 22.

Mark viii. 32.

²⁹ John xvi. 18.

³⁰ Luke xxiv. 19.

³¹ John xx. 9.

to their attention; and addressed all their force to obstruct an event, which would subvert the whole system of their interested malice.

No sooner was the body of the supposed IMPOSTOR laid in the tomb, than the chief priests, to provide equally against the attempts of fraud and violence, *seal the stone*, and encircle it with a guard; their precautions, however, though not eluded, were ineffectual; and the measures which they adopted to disappoint the counsels of GOD, availed only to give to their accomplishment a more illustrious effect.

On the appointed day a great earthquake announces the descent of an Angel, with a *countenance* ³² *like lightning*, and *raiment white as snow*. The soldiers are struck senseless by the formidable apparition; and, the stone being rolled from

³² Matt. xxviii. 3.

the mouth of the sepulchre, the followers of Jesus, by examining the place where the body had been laid are gradually prepared to welcome the stupendous truth—the Saviour was risen!—and after removing the obstinate unbelief of his immediate disciples, he shews himself to all the brethren, conversing and living with them at intervals, for the space of forty days.

As this thing was ³³ *not done in a corner,* but in the metropolis of Judæa, where the whole nation were then assembled for the celebration of the passover, none of its circumstances, so awakening to the popular attention, could pass without notice or investigation.

That the body was not to be found after the third day, was too notorious to be denied; and the sepulchre *hewn* ³⁴ *out*

³³ Acts xxvi. 26.

³⁴ Matt. xxvii. 60. Mark xv. 46.

of a rock, would not admit of a perforation through which it could be withdrawn—for the priests, therefore, and elders, resolute against the reception of their Messiah, one story alone remained—a wretched one indeed! but the influence of rank and reputation is of wide extent; and the gregarious creature Man, too indolent to judge for himself, is always disposed to follow in the track of his leader,

The Disciples of Jesus ³⁵ came by night, and while the guard slept stole him away.

What! is it possible that a few timid men, who, influenced by their fears, had deserted their Master in the hour of his distress;—who, far from believing, did not comprehend his predicted rising from the dead;—Is it possible, I say, that *these men* should dare to brave the vigilance of a Roman guard?—should be able, unde-

³⁵ Mat. xxviii. 13.

tested, to force open a strong sepulchre? should be thus rash, thus powerful, thus successful in an enterprise undertaken to carry away—What?—the carcase of an Impostor.—For what purpose?—The propagation of a falsehood. From what motive?—a just resentment against abandoned imposition.

But it would be ridiculous to array in battle against a shadow. At this period, when time has removed that extreme blindness of passion, on which the beams of the most direct truth may sometimes beat in vain, if any person can for an instant listen to a tale so charged with absurdity, let him seriously weigh with what he would reject, the grossness of the improbabilities, which he must admit.—That a considerable body of men, with the greatest opportunity, and leisure to be informed, should yet be deceived about a fact of the highest concern to their dearest interests; or that they should unanimously concur in the support of
what

what each of them must have known to be a lie;—that not one of the *five hundred* witnesses should be so clear-sighted as to detect the cheat, or so honest as to unmask it; that, on the contrary, they should all agree to force their testimony on the world, by exposing themselves for it to poverty, to contempt, to imprisonment, to tortures, and to death;—that they should act thus unaccountably with the assurance of displeasing that HOLY GOD in whom they believed, and encounter *present evil* for the acquisition of *future punishment*—is certainly a miracle more wonderful than those to which infidelity presumes to object.

But on what authority do the circumstances of this relation claim our assent?—on that of EYE-WITNESSES and CONTEMPORARIES, whose integrity their enemies never could impeach; and whose narrative passed unrefuted when falsehood must have fallen under immediate detection; and even truth, of little notoriety,

riety, have suffered from hardy contradiction.

In a former discourse, I mentioned a few of the many reasons on which we receive our present gospels, as the genuine productions of those holy men *who saw and bare record*. I will now only observe, that from its early importance to a large description of mankind, the evangelical canon possesses proofs of authenticity and purity, to which no other writings can pretend.

That the sacred Historians, by disagreeing in their accounts, bring the whole of their truth into suspicion, is one of the most frequent and formidable objections of our modern unbelievers.

As the present occasion will not permit me to enter fully into the subject, I would recommend to such as wish for an answer to these sceptical cavils, some of the harmonies of gospel history with which our
Divines

Divines have assisted the cause of religion. From the perusal of these able works, the candid enquirer will rise, I am persuaded, with a mind completely satisfied; and will be sensible that the few and slight variations, which may yet remain unreconciled, tend rather to strengthen than to invalidate the general credit of the evidence; as they prove beyond dispute, that the witnesses were not in league for the fabrication of their story; but that each of them, in his own manner, and with his own views, delivered what he knew.

It is not, however, *wholly* on the strength of these Christian records, that we found our belief of the resurrection.—The Heathen writings give an attestation of it, not so direct, indeed, but calculated likewise strongly to convince.

Of the fortitude of the first Christians in circumstances of the extremest terror to flesh and blood; and of the vigorous growth

growth of the gospel under the weightiest pressure of external disadvantage, we are assured by authors; who yet could regard the ONE as a baneful superstition, and the OTHERS as Martyrs in a cause hostile to their species: but WE know that human nature was elevated to this astonishing height by the certainty of our Lord's being raised from the dead; and that borne on the same conviction, Christianity flew over the face of the earth, diffusing from her bosom the virtues of humanity, and the knowledge of Heaven, to as wide an extent as had ever, in the same space of time, been desolated by the proudest triumph of kingly ambition.

Neither, to arguments drawn from this testimony, conclusive as they may be, is it necessary to confide the great truth which we assert,—for it will be powerfully forced upon us, by a view even of the scene which is immediately before us.

If

If we carry back our retrospect to the ages preceding Christianity,—of the fairest portion of the world, we shall see one part immersed in the impure vices of luxury,—the other deformed with the horrid ones of barbarism; and the whole overshadowed by a superstition, which blasting every rectitude of mind, was favourable only to the rankness of the passions.

Withdrawing our eyes from those unhappy times, and fixing them on the present, we observe the same portion of the world reformed and enlightened;—its virtues called out, and cherished; its vices, if not eradicated, restrained and checked, under the dominion of an holy and spiritual religion. Struck with the contrast we investigate the cause; and the enquiry leads us directly to that *witness of the resurrection which the Apostles were enabled by the Holy Ghost to give with great power*. The numerous wonders which at first established the belief of this glorious miracle, instantly crowd upon our sight;
for

for our reason assures us, that the degree of evidence which could reduce the softness of Asia, and the pride of Italy; the corruption of Corinth, and the dissoluteness of Cyprus to the chaste severity of the gospel, must be extraordinary, and supported by such a splendid manifestation of DEITY, as is recorded in the Sacred Writings.

On the whole, therefore, we may affirm, that the proofs of this fundamental article of the Christian faith are so numerous and strong, that to convince, they need only be dispassionately examined.

We cannot, indeed, like the Apostles, confirm our testimony with acts of Divine power.—The more apparent gifts of the Holy Spirit, which, in the first hard struggle of the gospel, with *the Prince of this world*, were graciously indulged, on the removal of the necessity, were wisely withdrawn; and the further progress of the word of God permitted, to the efficacy

cy of its intrinsic excellence on the human reason, assisted by the silent operation of Grace.

But, if in one particular, the weight of evidence seem to be diminished in our hands,—in others, it is certainly increased. For the truth of what they preached, the Apostles could refer to the unsullied tenor of their lives, and to the works which they did in the name of JESUS.—To the *lives* and the *works* of these holy men, we can also refer ;—but from their *deaths* we can further corroborate our preaching; and in our warfare with infidelity, can engage the *whole army of martyrs* on our side.—The first *Evangelists* could reason from a very short experience of the plan of Providence ;—but *we* can trace it through a series of centuries in the establishment ;—the correction,—the preservation of the Church.—Of the arguments of *infant Christianity*, those deduced from the completion of prophecies were certainly convincing ; but with *us*, from the sub-

subversion of Jerusalem, the present condition of the Jews, and the grand Papal apostacy, the consequence of these arguments is incontestably greater;—in short, therefore, if the *apostolical* evidence of the fact we are examining be the more *brilliant*, *ours* is equally substantial;—for, if the *first* applied partly to the senses, the *last* urges its appeal more forcibly to the understanding; and so great is its power, that unless men can be supposed to act against every motive,—unless the whole credit of history be overthrown; unless the most wonderful effects can exist without some adequate cause, we must be assured that JESUS CHRIST, who was crucified at the instigation of the Jews, by the Roman Governor of Judea, AROSE FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY.

Yes—MY LORD! AND MY GOD!—the HOLY³⁶ ONE! was not suffered to see corruption! THOU didst arise! THOU didst

³⁶ Acts ii. 27.

break the bars of the grave!—It was of this glorious day THY FATHER spake before the faints of Heaven; HE said, THOU art MY SON, *this Day have I begotten* ³⁷ *Thee!*—THOU wert from eternity MY WORD,—the SON of my MAJESTY, and my POWER.—But on this day THOU art born of the Grave, the SON of my JUSTICE, and my MERCY:—in Thy new character of Man's Redeemer and Intercessor, THOU art now made ³⁸ *perfect by sufferings.*—THOU wast delivered ³⁹ *for his offences, and art risen again for his justification!*—THOU art become the FIRST ⁴⁰ FRUITS of them that slept:—the AUTHOR of eternal ⁴¹ *salvation to all them that will obey thee;* and THOU comest before to prepare a place for Thy followers, that where THOU art they also may be.

³⁷ Psalm ii. 7.

³⁹ Rom. iv. 25.

⁴¹ Heb. v. 9.

³⁸ Heb. ii. 10.

⁴⁰ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

This,

This, my brethren, is the language of God, in the writings dictated by his Spirit, and it will lead us to consider the nature of the connection between the Lord's resurrection and our own.

To the reasons which I suggested, in a discourse, (*e*) for the insufficiency of inferior sacrifices, I must now add another, of equal importance with the rest.

As the expiation of sin implies, exemption from the punishment to which it was obnoxious, the atonement, which was complete, must reverse the sentence passed upon the transgression of Adam. The sentence was DEATH, entire and eternal; the reversal of it consequently, by reinstating man in his first privileges, must be LIFE entire and eternal, of body as well as soul.

(*e*) On the Atonement of Christ.

But how could this be effected by the substitution of any creature, who, bound in the chains of death, was unable to rescue his own body from corruption? To have recourse for the answer to the supreme pleasure of God, will be little to the purpose; for the same supreme pleasure might, it is allowed, have pardoned sin upon *any*, or even *without* any condition.

Since, however, the wisdom of God judged it expedient not to grant the remission, without an adequate satisfaction; from the unity of the Divine plan, we may conclude, that the benefits of that remission must result also from a cause closely, and apparently connected with them.

He, therefore, whose soul ⁴² *was to be made an offering for sin, must likewise be the RESURRECTION and the LIFE;—or the*

⁴² Isai. liii. 10.

source from whence the consequences of his accepted sacrifice should immediately be derived.—*The last Adam, therefore, had life in himself, and was a quickening Spirit.*

When He arose from the grave, the Lord could properly say to his disciples, *as I live, ⁴³ ye shall live also.*—By raising his own body, He demonstrated the power which could raise ours; and by ascending with our nature, He refuted that philosophy, (*f*) which for the first ages impeded the triumph, and tainted the purity of His Gospel;—talking, I know not what, idly and arrogantly, about the *invincible malignity* and the *necessary corruptibility of matter.*

The resurrection, then, of Christ, considered by itself, would supply us with

⁴³ John xiv. 10.

(*f*) Of the Gnosticks, and the latter Platonists.

some rational arguments in favour of our own ; but considered as the confirmation of his Divinity, including of course the full ratification of His truth, it will convert into knowledge the inferences of reason.

For what hath GOD OUR LORD declared? that, *as the FATHER raiseth ⁴⁴ up the dead, and quickeneth them ; even so the SON quickeneth whom he will. That the dead shall hear the voice ⁴⁵ of the Son of God, and they who hear shall live. That whosoever believeth ⁴⁶ in Him, though by the dissolution of the mortal body, he were dead, yet by the restoration of that body, in another and more perfect state, shall he live.—That, the hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves ⁴⁷ shall hear his voice, and come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

⁴⁴ John v. 21.

⁴⁵ John v. 25.

⁴⁶ John xi. 25.

⁴⁷ John v. 28.

To these positive assurances of the Saviour, and to many others of the same import, which might be adduced, may be added the testimony of those holy men, who, actuated by the immediate influence of the Spirit, spake in the name, and with the authority of their master.

By the Apostles, the resurrection of Christ was always regarded as more than the *promise*,—as the *earnest* of the resurrection of man. They say, *that God hath given assurance* ⁴⁸ *of the final judgment to all men, in that He hath raised CHRIST from the dead.*—The whole of St. Paul's close and strong reasoning in his Epistle to the Corinthians, is established on this ground. With that just boldness which is peculiar to himself, he ventures to assert, that, *if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not CHRIST* ⁴⁹ *risen.*—And he asks with astonishment, *If CHRIST be preached, that He rose from the dead, how say*

⁴⁸ Acts xvii. 31.

⁴⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 13.

some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? as if the union of the two resurrections were so perfect, that to reject the one, must necessarily forbid the admission of the other.

To the clear voice of a REVELATION, supported by the evidence of HISTORY, and the deductions of REASON, what is there to be opposed?—the incredibility of the fact?—the impossibility of God's restoring the dissipated body?—of his recalling the Spirit to its former mansion?—of his commanding *this mortal to put on immortality?*

But, who is it that thus pretends to circumscribe the INFINITE :—to make his intellect the measure of OMNIPOTENCE : to say to the Power which formed the Universe, *hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ; and here shall thy proud might be staid?*—Who is the wondrous being
that

that can thus assume?—weak, erring, ignorant MAN!

How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?—but tell me, rash enquirer! How does a seed⁵⁰ when committed to the ground, shoot downwards into roots, and upwards into leaves, and flowers and fruits?—By what process, in the animal generation, is a dead unorganized atom unfolded into strength, symmetry and beauty—animated with consciousness, or enlightened with intelligence?—whence are those thoughts, and what is their essence which are now lifted up against your MAKER? or by what alliance does the mechanism of your lips obey the presumption of your mind, and move to form it into sounds?—No—climb from science to science; make the elements your servants, and investigate their properties; rise above this sphere; and measure their planets, compute their dis-

⁵⁰ 1 Cor. xv. 37.

tances,

tances, ascertain their journies through the void; nay soar yet higher, till your conceit approaches the *Eternal's throne*;—you still float only on the surface of knowledge!—you are still only in the suburbs of the Deity! even on this earth, your own habitation, you are a stranger;—even *here*, you are surrounded with *enchantment*, where every thing is *too wonderful for you*⁵¹ *to know; and too high for you to attain!*—*thou sayest I am rich, and increased with*⁵² *goods, and have need of nothing; and perceivest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor and naked, and blind.*

But sensible that the humility resulting from conscious weakness, is the proper ornament of a being like man; and the surest evidence of that superior mind which the presumptuous can only affect,—let us, my Brethren, avoid this pride of fools,

⁵¹ Psalm cxxxix. 6.

⁵² Rev. iii. 17.

nor madly reject all that the narrow embrace of our understanding cannot enfold.

In the present instance, our faith is not demanded for a display of power, greater than that which every where environs us. Is not He, who could create, able to renew and perpetuate? Or is not He, who could impress upon matter the variety of forms which we behold, and give it such degrees of increasing levity from the metal to the sun-beam, able, not only to clothe *this corruptible with incorruption*, but to adorn it with angelic beauty; or to endue it with almost spiritual subtlety?—Certainly he is;—and (if the Spirit of Truth cannot lie, nor the God of Faithfulness deceive) certainly He will.

Yes—we shall all awake, *and the dead in CHRIST* ⁵³ *shall rise first*—their scattered atoms shall first hear the Saviour's voice, and uniting kindle into existence,

⁵³ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

never more to experience dissolution.—In that great, and terrible day of the Lord, *when the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall ⁵⁴ melt with fervent heat*, the righteous shall rejoice in the strength of their salvation.—Amid the groans of expiring nature, not only unappalled, but chearful;—not only chearful, but exulting, they shall spring to meet their Redeemer—for THOU *wast slain and hast ⁵⁵ redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God kings and priests.*—Yes—(the SANCTITY shall reply) yes, ye beloved of my Father! I have redeemed you!—it was for you that I assumed humanity;—for you that I sweated blood in the garden;—for you that I poured out my life upon Calvary;—for you that I rose again from the grave—ye have not rejected my example;—ye have not defrauded my agonies;—ye have

⁵⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 10,⁵⁵ Rev. v. 9.

not disappointed my triumph!—*enter then into the joys of your* ⁵⁶ *Master, into the place prepared for you from the beginning of the world—there the LAMB, which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed you, and shall lead you unto living fountains of waters, and God* ⁵⁷ *shall wipe away all tears for ever from your eyes.*

This is the resurrection of the JUST—but there is also a resurrection of the UNJUST.

And shall *they*, when the day of wrath is come, be able to stand? Amid the terrors of the concluding scene shall *they* be unappalled;—cheerful,—exulting,—springing to meet the caresses of their Redeemer?—Alas!—they have no REDEEMER. They *trod under foot the SON OF* ⁵⁸ *GOD*, and they must now meet the severity of their JUDGE. Idle would be the attempt to give in their full strength

⁵⁶ Matt. xxv. 21. ⁵⁷ Rev. vii. 17. ⁵⁸ Heb. x. 29.

the horrors of the sinner, or the raptures of the saint : for where is the human pencil whose colours are sufficiently glowing for the one, or deeply dark enough for the other.

Let us, however, attempt to elevate our conceptions to the awfulness of a moment, big with the issues of ETERNITY ! and let us then consider, that our feelings, in that mighty instant will be determined by the improvement or neglect of that interval of Grace, which, through the Divine indulgence, is still ours.

When the great consummation will take place, and *the earth, and the works that are therein be burnt up*, is one of those secret counsels of the Eternal, which our curiosity would vainly explore ; *the Lord, to whom a thousand years is as one day*, may hasten or retard it : and the succession of man be instantly stopped, or continued through myriads of generations,

as

as the plan of Infinite Wisdom may require.—But, with *individual man*, we are assured that the period of probation must soon close ; and his everlasting destiny be irrecoverably decided :—at the crisis of his death, each of us shall hear the voice of the *Angel swearing* ⁵⁹ by HIM who liveth for ever and ever, that TIME shall be no more : and proclaiming,—He that ⁶⁰ is unjust, let him be unjust still ;—and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ;—and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Of this truth, my Christian Brethren, we cannot doubt :—and yet how weak is its influence upon our conduct ! when we throw away our little all of time, in frivolous or in criminal activity ; the angels look down upon our madness with wonder and concern : those exalted INTELLIGENCES behold the arm of Justice uplifted to destroy us, and withheld only by

⁵⁹ Rev. x. 6.

⁶⁰ Rev. ii. 11.

HIM,

HIM, *who was dead, and is alive*:—they hear those blessed words again interceding for His enemies; *Father,*⁶¹ *forgive them, for they know not what they do?* Oh! blot not out their names from the book of life; but let my Spirit continue to strive with them! His still⁶³ small voice may yet persuade them to be reconciled to thee. They may yet be clothed⁶⁴ in white raiment, and yet allow me to confess their names before Thee, and Thy Angels!

Let us attend, my Brethren!—and, at length, awake to the fearfulness of our situation! let us be actuated with a strong feeling of the object, and the duties; the importance, and the frailty of life;—suitably to the condition of creatures, who, by their works on earth, may open for themselves a way to Heaven:—let us do good to Man, and be grateful to God! and while we offer to our Maker the acceptable worship of comprehensive Cha-

⁶¹ Luke xxiii. 24.

⁶³ 1 Kings xix. 12.

⁶² Rev. iii. 5.

⁶⁴ Rev. iii. 5.

rity,

rity, let us not refuse those offices of devotion, which are more immediately directed to Him.

Of these the HOLY COMMUNION is the chief.

It is recorded in the Gospel, that after He was risen, the Saviour met, and conversed with two of his disciples,—but that He was not known by them, till *He took bread,*⁶⁵ *and blessed, and brake, and gave it to them.*—That *their eyes, which before were holden, were then opened, and they knew the Lord.*—Repair now, my beloved, to the altar! and when the bread is there taken, and blessed, and broken, and given to you, may the same HOLY CEREMONY be attended with the same DIVINE EFFICACY!—may it open your eyes!—may it make you to know, and not only to know, but to *put*⁶⁶ *on the Lord Jesus Christ,* your Redeemer and Intercessor,

⁶⁵ Luke xxiv. 16.

⁶⁶ Gal. iii. 27.

the first and the last, who was dead, and is alive!

Now, the GOD OF PEACE, that brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to ⁶⁷ do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

⁶⁷ Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

S E R M O N VII.

On NATURAL and SPIRITUAL MAN.

2 COR. VI. 10.

AS HAVING NOTHING, AND YET POSSESSING ALL THINGS.

THAT Christianity was indebted for part of its success, and may refer part of its evidence to the conduct of its first ministers and profelytes—is a fact which has frequently been noticed, and which cannot be denied.—A religion which asserted such unbounded influence

over the human mind, as to quell its strongest passions;—as to make it alike indifferent to the sollicitations of present pleasure, and to the menaces of present pain;—as to raise it altogether above this earthly scene, and to give body and power to the stoic dream of intellectual grandeur—must bear, impressed upon its very essence, the stamp of DIVINITY.—For certainly to that faith, which, at its first propagation, demanded sacrifices, the most repugnant to our nature, nothing less than a visible exertion of the ALMIGHTY GOD could secure a favourable reception.

Other religions may possess a larger extent of dominion, and a more numerous following.—But no religion can boast of a dominion so supreme, or of a following so honourably acquired.

Polytheism, which once extended over the earth, and still occupies the greater part of it, was the effect of general darkness;

ness; and as it assumed no controul over the appetites, was the cause of general depravity. Not affecting to reform, it was not likely to displease:—and not exacting any difficult services, it could never ascertain the allegiance of its subjects.

Mahometanism, indeed, whose barbarity involves a large division of mankind advances some arrogant pretensions; but their vanity is equal to their arrogance; and the system of the Arabian impostor is as defective in that evidence of which we now speak, as in every other that attests the religion of our blessed Lord;—it was embraced by the corruption of the heart, which it condescended to flatter:—it was disseminated by the sword, which it knew but too well how to wield; its first profelytes were the profelytes of interest, and its subsequent ones of fear; while the severest woes were threatened to the obstinacy of its enemies,—unlimited gratification was promised to the ambition,

tion, the avarice, the voluptuousness of its friends.

But the disciples of HIM, whose *kingdom was not of this world*, were ordered to take up the *cross*, and not the *sword*;—were invited to sufferings, not to indulgencies;—to poverty, not to riches;—to degradation and contempt, not to power; yet with the order they chearfully complied;—to the invitation they exultingly crowded; *if in this life only they had hope in Christ, they were indeed of all men the most miserable*: but in another life they had hope in their glorified Master; and they were not mad enough to throw away this world, without the assurance of a better:—a circumstance of so invigorating a nature, as to be fully equal to the most wonderful effects!

In the chapter from which the text is taken, we are presented with a small picture of these first disciples of Christianity,

¹ John xviii. 36.

² Cor. xv. 19.

in the strong and bold colouring of Saint Paul; their purity, their patience under afflictions, their worldly poverty, and their spiritual treasures, their different conditions as inhabitants of earth, and heirs to the promises of Heaven, as members of a community of men, and stewards of the mysteries of God, are admirably included in a description, which closes with these emphatic words, they were as *having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

The propriety of these expressions, as they are here applied, is too obvious to require explanation, but their sense is of wider comprehension — while the whole race of man may be regarded by the eye of reason, *as having nothing*; — that portion of it whose views are elevated to the prospects, and whose minds are new-modelled by the plastic virtue of the gospel, may be considered *as possessing all things,*

To establish these truths, and when established, to inculcate their consequences

quences, shall be the endeavour of my present discourse.

On a large survey of the human species, the first objects which meet the sight are the differences of condition—some formed by nature, and some growing out of the refinements of society; the distinctions occasioned by family and fortune, by station and power, though widely prevalent, are not universal; while those which owe their birth to the qualities of the body, or the endowments of the mind;—to strength, courage, ability or virtue, are every where acknowledged—by the savage, as well as by the citizen.

Attending to these strong lines of discrimination, philosophy (*a*) arranged in three classes, (the mental, the corporeal, and the external) those various advantages which raised one individual above

(*a*) Cic. Tusc. vi. 30. Offic. iii. de Fin. iii. 13.

another;

another; and allowing the *first* only to be the *property* of man, placed the others with those accidents, which could not add to his true importance, and could not be admitted into the list of his real possessions.

But, a disposition so contradictory to the prejudices of the multitude was always referred to that fondness for paradox with which philosophy was reproached; and all the gaudy externals of life were still pursued as *real goods*, and still envied as *real possessions*.

The sage, however, might support his system with an irresistible power of argument. He might affirm, that man could not be considered as possessing *property* in whatever exists independently of himself, as the attainment of it could not be commanded by his own exertions; as the permanency of it did not rest upon his own conduct; as the enjoyment of it was, at the best, uncertain; and, for the most part,

part, did not belong to the imaginary owner.

Without condescending to notice the distinction of birth, which is altogether the creature of opinion, he might appeal to the experience of the world for the refutation of their pretensions, who assume on their riches, or their power.—Think not, (he might say) mistaken mortals, think not yourselves the Proprietors of those toys that have been thrown in your way by the same capricious fortune, which has frequently withheld them from the strongest merit, and the brightest talents. No—you are ornamented with them only for a time, and possibly for a very short time. Enemies may plunder, rivals may supplant, friends may betray; or, should you suffer from none of the ordinary occurrences of life—death *must soon*, and *may immediately* step in to evince the idleness of your claims. If you could however be said to possess what you hold on such precarious conditions, can you, with-

without an abuse of language, be said to possess what it cannot be admitted that you enjoy. You have reached your objects—you are rich; or you are powerful. But, when the first flush of acquisition is over, the heightened vigour of the pulse subsides into languor—and then, ceasing to be rich, or powerful for yourselves, you commence the agents of others.—With more specious reasoning might ye support your title to your bodily advantages; to your health, or your beauty, or your strength;—though these accidents be the blossoms of a day, which disease may blight in the morning, and age must wither before the night.—No—deluded mortals!—direct your pride to its proper objects, and riot in its generous indulgence!—Let it not settle on what is not your own; and remember that nothing is your own, which subsists independently of MIND. There reigns the MAN. There alone are to be found those true riches; that genuine consequence; that legitimate power which cannot be affected by the
shift-

shiftings of fortune, the violence of enemies, the artifices of rivals, or the treachery of friends.

These were the common places, partly indeed erroneous, but certainly splendid, of the sublimest philosophy of Greece.

In the history of that celebrated country, we meet with a story remarkably apposite to the present subject. At the sack of his native city a philosopher, (*b*) whose life had been devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, and the practice of virtue, was with difficulty rescued from the weapons of the soldiery, to whose rapaciousness all his little patrimony had fallen a prey; and by whose undistinguishing fury all his family had been slaughtered. In these circumstances he was brought before the conqueror, who, respecting his character, wished to alleviate his misfortunes. "Acquaint me with your losses,

(*b*) Stilpo of Megara, v. Diog. Laertius. Seneca Epist. 9. & de constantia Sapientum.—cap. 5.

" and

“and rely on my bounty for their reparation”—was the generous address of the Prince. “I have experienced no losses—of my only possessions, my wisdom and my INTEGRITY, your soldiers were neither able nor solicitous to plunder me”—was the magnanimous reply of the sage. He carried into his conduct the full theory of the schools; and in the most trying situation asserted a superiority of soul, which, unsupported by the promises of religion, is really astonishing.

Yet, how manifest a truth is it, that even those possessions on which he seemed with so much just confidence to depend, were insufficient causes of pride—that they were not *his own*; but that being lent for particular purposes, the trust might be resumed; and at the will of the SOVEREIGN ARBITER, his wisdom be converted into weakness, and the arrogance of his integrity be humbled into defect.

This

This information might have been confirmed with the evidences of a revelation, which, removing the fatal (c) necessity of the Stoics, and a first cause blended with its (d) own effects, discovered a distinct and presiding mind, every where attending to the minutest portion of its government; engaging even the extravagancies of free agency, in the support of general order; balancing advantages with responsibility, and taking away or conferring, as the abuse, or the improvement of its bounty might call for punishment or reward.

This testimony of revelation, as far as it respected the dependance of man, might be strengthened by the observations which must forcibly result from an impartial survey of the human species. The effects of disease on their understanding; and of situation on their virtue; the slight attacks by which the triumphs of the head or the

(c) Cic. de fat. 15. Tuscul. 5. De Nat. Deor. 1.
20.

(d) De Nat. Deor. 2. 14.

heart were frequently overthrown:—the strange inequalities of which, at different periods of life, and often at different hours of the day, the same person was sensible, might be urged to refute the vain boast of mental independence. For his further humiliation, the sage might be directed to some of those melancholy instances which every where occur of perverted reason, or of annihilated intellect. That wretch (he might be told) who is now before you, with eyes rolling in the wildness of phrensy, or fixed in the glare of idiocy, but lately possessed a mind active, strong, subtle and clear: the definer of the moral limits;—the arbiter of science,—the pervader of nature. Where now is this Sovereign, and this God?—deposed—naked—degraded below the level of bestial instinct; while the throne is filled with a Slumber worse than Death, or a Disorder more horrible than the Slumber. This miserable object, it is probable, once indulged in the same proud security with yourself—and from
whence

whence is your assurance of safety from a blow, which may reduce you to the same mortifying condition with him.

In this manner the Christian philosopher might have enlightened the Heathen; and, inculcating his absolute dependance, have exalted his proper dignity.

The indulgence of pride is not only irrational, as ill suited to a creature like man; but it is hurtful, as it impedes the advancement of our nature, by disuniting us from our God.

HUMILITY therefore is the greatest lesson of the gospel; and on conscious weakness is built that glorious edifice, the base of which rests upon earth, while its summit reaches to Heaven.—It is to *the³ poor in spirit*, that the promises of HIM, *who was meek⁴ and lowly of heart*, are confined; and we are assured that unless we become

³ Matt. v. 3.

⁴ Matt. xi. 29.

“ as ⁵ little children, we shall not enter
 “ into the kingdom of God.”

For a duty thus strongly enforced, the reasons are clearly assigned,—not only *riches and honours come from the LORD; but likewise every good and* ⁶ *every perfect gift.*—We are taught that *we have nothing which we* ⁷ *did not receive*—that *it is God which* ⁸ *worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure,*—that *it is the LORD who* ⁹ *giveth, and the LORD who taketh away.*

To its precepts the gospel adds the instruction of examples. The self-confident virtue of St. Peter was left for an instant unprotected, and in that instant it was overcome. The pride of the Pharisees was displeasing to God—their learning and their wisdom were therefore of no

⁵ Matt. xviii. 3.

James i. 17.

⁷ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

⁸ Phill. ii. 13.

⁹ Job. i. 21.

avail,—for GOD *blinded their eyes,*¹⁰ *and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes—nor understand with their hearts, and be converted.*

To this evangelical doctrine, the feeling of every person unites its testimony; for the WISEST and the BEST are ever the most ready to acknowledge those frequent returns of *intellectual and moral* infirmity which so strongly intimate that it is only *by the grace of God we are what we are;*—reason therefore, and revelation, both attest, that the poor *stranger and sojourner man hath nothing.*

But, *if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, and may then be considered as possessing all things.*—The truth of this assertion is now to be examined.

What therefore, we must enquire, are the ALL THINGS intended by the Apostle?

¹⁰ John xii. 40.

—is wealth, or station, or power, to be classed under the comprehensive title? No—of these our religion, far from affecting to dispose, is studious to inculcate the vanity. We are cautioned by her divine discourse, *not to trust in*¹¹ *uncertain riches; not to mind*¹² *high things; not to delight in the*¹³ *fashion of this world which passeth away.*—If she cannot then give the leading objects of human activity, with what propriety can she promise to her followers the present possession of all things?—Let us investigate the requisites of substantial happiness;—the ALL which can weigh in the scale of rational estimation, and the solid grounds of her assurance will immediately be manifest.

That happiness is the exclusive privilege of the higher, and more splendid orders of life, is one of those popular prejudices which reason and philosophy

¹¹ 1 Tim. vi. 17.

¹² Rom. xii. 16.

¹³ 1 Cor. vii. 31.

have ever contemptuously rejected. The quick eye of the sage glancing through the various ranks of society, detects, under the shed of the peasant, as frequently as in the palace of the noble, this object of universal pursuit. He concludes therefore, that, independent of external circumstances, the celestial plant is altogether the growth of the heart: and observing that the least peevishness of dissatisfaction—the most distant wish of being what we are not, is able to defeat the greatest means of enjoyment; he discovers, that without *content* happiness cannot exist.

But content is the gift of *Religion*. It is taught by the precepts, and inspired by the spirit of the Gospel. *In whatever state he is*, the Christian is instructed *therewith to be* ¹⁴ *satisfied*—and, by the demonstrated futility of those objects which kindle

¹⁴ Phil. iv. 11. 1 Tim. vi. 8. Heb. iii. 15.

the contention of the passions, his mind is disposed to receive the salutary lesson.

As happiness, however, cannot exist without *content*, content cannot avail without the approbation of *conscience*.—

The power of this *delightful*, or this *terrible* inmate, has been attested by the general voice of man. It has always been considered as the representative of the DEITY in the human bosom, and to secure its favourable testimony has been the ultimate end of every system of morality.

But, for this great attainment, can any system of morality be so effectual as that religion, which enforces, with an irresistible weight of motives, *whatsoever things are*¹⁵ *true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report?*

¹⁵ Phil. iv. 8.

Possessed of *content*, and unalarmed by the terrors of *conscience*, our relish of existence will yet not be quick enough to merit the title of *happiness*, if the *understanding* remain uncultivated; if its vigour be lost in indolence, or wasted in frivolous action.

On this important subject of the right conduct of the mind, religion is the most powerful teacher. She inculcates the necessity of unremitted vigilance. She enjoins the proper improvement of our talents.—She tells us that the Christian must *press toward* ¹⁶ *the mark for the prize of his high calling*, progressive in knowledge as in virtue—proposing the duty, she likewise furnishes the reward; and compensates every exertion which she directs, by disclosing to us new treasures of INTELLECTUAL LIGHT, and by unlocking to us as yet untasted sources of SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION,

¹⁶ Phil. iii. 14.

He who is content with his condition; who is exposed to no disquiet from his conscience; whose understanding is occupied and improved, must upon the whole, be happy. But his happiness at intervals may be interrupted by the distresses of life, or by the apprehensions of Death.

To yield protection from the assault of these formidable enemies, was the principal aim of philosophy. In the attempt, however, the boastings of this proud offspring of reason were far greater than her success: and her WISE MAN, whom she painted as looking down from the eminence of his mind, on the weaknesses and passions of humanity, has been proved, by the experience of all ages, to be the creature of mere imagination.

Here then, again, RELIGION interposes with superior efficacy, and fully accomplishes the imperfect endeavour of the sage.

The Christian acquainted with the true nature of *life*, and of *death*, disregards the *light afflictions* of the former, which he knows ¹⁷ *are but for a moment* :—and joyfully hastens to the latter, which he considers as the completion of his trial, and the recompence of his toils.

A mind harmonized *within*, and not to be shaken from *without*, was the splendid acquisition for which all the efforts of philosophy were ineffectually excited.—Beyond this calm, and sedentary felicity, she never even affected to lead her pupil :—and, though she talked about a certain mystical abstraction from sense, and the contemplation of the GREAT FIRST CAUSE, her language was calculated only to strike the *ear*, and not to seize upon the *heart*.

But the power of religion, not bounded by such narrow limits, exalts the MORAL to the DIVINE ; and by discovering to us in the Deity, a *Creator*, and a *Preserver*,—

¹⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

a GOD, who was ¹⁸ in Christ reconciling the World to Himself;—awakens the most rapturous emotions of gratitude, and thus sublimates into positive enjoyment, what before was only a negation of pain.

All the requisites of earthly happiness are now enumerated, for He who is blessed with content, the approbation of conscience, an understanding with all its energies called forth and instructed;—a mind lifted, by the assurance of immortality, above the littleness of life and of death;—and the glowing sense of gratitude still discharged yet still due, must be acknowledged by the suffrage of reason to possess all things on this side of Heaven.

But who is this favoured—this elevated being?

The Servant of ¹⁹ Righteousness;—He who is complete ²⁰ in Christ.

¹⁸ 2 Cor. v. 19.

¹⁹ Rom. vi. 18.

²⁰ Coloss. ii. 10.

Yes

Yes Lord ! whatever satisfies, or strengthens, or dignifies, or enraptures the soul, cometh from THY bounty; the heart on which THOU lookest, thou fillest with blessings !---the bosom which thou makest the temple of THY HOLY SPIRIT, Thou lavishly deckest with thy treasures !---and man, who without Thee is *wretched and miserable, and poor, and naked, and blind*, when visited with THY SALVATION becometh rich, and encreased with goods, and hath need of nothing !---yes, mighty and gracious LORD ! he was *as having nothing, he is as possessing all things.*

Attend, my Brethren, to these truths, and impress them upon your hearts !---Whatever may be the characters appointed for you in the drama of life, forget not that you are MEN, and be HUMBLE ; but remember that you are CHRISTIANS and EXULT.---*Thus saith the Lord,---let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might;*

nor

nor let the rich ²¹ man glory in his riches ;
but let him that glorieth glory in this,
that he understandeth and knoweth ME,
that I am THE LORD.

Are you then placed by the will of the
SUPREME DISPOSER in the higher classes
of society?—be not proud of the transi-
ent distinction!—consider power and
wealth as sacred trusts of which you must
soon render an account! regard them
with jealousy, as they are the tempters
of your integrity ; and with pleasure only
as they are the ministers of your virtues !
reflect that what may be wasted in criminal
gratification, or in subserviency to con-
temptible ostentation, may become a sa-
crifice of sweet-smelling savour to the
Lord, and may supply you with the
means of heaping obligations (which will
not be unrecorded in the book of life) on
YOUR REDEEMER, when He solicits you,
in the persons of your unfortunate breth-
ren, *to give ²² him meat when he is hungry,*

²¹ Jerem. ix. 23.

²² Matt. xxv. 35.

and

and drink when he is thirsty;—to clothe him when he is naked; to visit him when he is sick, and in prison.

Do you occupy the lower stations of life?—are your circumstances not affluent—or are they even distressful?

We pray you, in CHRIST'S stead,²³ be ye reconciled to God.

Despair not!—nor entertain an opinion so injurious to your HEAVENLY FATHER as—that you are less the object of his affection, than your more gaudy fellow-creatures!—apply your hearts unto god-livels, and ye shall be sensible that HE who spared not HIS OWN SON, but gave him for us all, will also with HIM²⁴ freely give you all things.—To your thoughtless superiors ye shall then be able, in the language of your Saviour to say, *we have meat²⁵ to eat which ye know not of;*—and

²³ 2 Cor. v. 20.

²⁴ Rom. viii. 32.

²⁵ John iv. 32.

under the heaviest pressure of worldly want YOUR GOD and YOUR LORD shall bring this transporting consolation to your ears,—*blessed be ye ²⁶ poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

* And now, my Brethren, deeply penetrated with the sense of our natural abasement, and of our spiritual dignity, let us approach to the HOLY TABLE, and there pay that debt of grateful memorial, so justly due to HIM, by whose ²⁷ poverty we are made rich!

Let us represent to ourselves the BLESSED JESUS, seated with his disciples at the last supper, and enforcing the observance of the heavenly communion which He instituted, with that affecting adjuration, *this do ²⁸ in remembrance of me!* and then,

²⁶ Luke vi. 20.

²⁷ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

²⁸ Luke xxii. 19.

* Preached at the celebration of the Communion.

brethren,

Brethren, let our devotion behold the same GRACIOUS and GLORIOUS BEING, still presiding over the same hallowed ceremony;—still breaking the bread;—still blessing the cup;—still adjuring us to partake, and do likewise in remembrance of Him!

Nor think me too bold, if I thus seem to assign an especial locality to the OMNIPRESENCE, which inhabiteth infinity.

Where two or three are gathered together in ²⁹ His name, there are we assured that He is in the midst of them. When therefore, the number of the faithful are assembled around his altar, to offer up their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, will not his more peculiar presence be with them? will he not declare his acceptance of their *labour* ³⁰ *of love*; with a larger manifestation of his spirit.

²⁹ Matt. xviii. 20.

³⁰ 1 Thess. i. 3.

Approach

Approach then, Christians, and feast with YOUR LORD! nor imagine that ye comply with all the purposes of the divine ordinance, by observing it only on those stated periods which are set apart by the Church for its more remarkable solemnities.

In the apostolic and primitive assemblies, the common service of the Lord's Day was always concluded with the holy *breaking of bread*.—If the glowing and steady zeal of those happy ages was inflamed, and confirmed by the frequency of communion—shall not *we*, who labour under numerous disadvantages, have recourse to the same expedient, to preserve the freshness of our devotion, from the tainting influence of a corrupted world?

Yes, Christians,—with joyfulness,—with faith,—with *that perfect* ³¹ *love which casteth*

³¹ 1 John iv. 18.

out fear, we will hasten to the holy rite,—for the worthy participation of the consecrated elements, we may assure ourselves, that no other preparation is necessary, than a virtuous regularity of life; nor more exacted from us, than with those allowances which human infirmity will always require, and which, from *Him, who in all things* ³² *was made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful HIGH PRIEST,* it will always receive—that we walk worthy of the vocation ³³ *wherewith we are called.*

³² Heb. ii. 17.

³³ Ephes. iv. 1.

S E R M O N . VIII.

On the DISPENSATIONS of GOD,

1 KINGS XIX. 11, 12.

AND BEHOLD THE LORD PASSED BY, AND
A GREAT AND STRONG WIND RENT THE
MOUNTAINS, AND BRAKE IN PIECES THE
ROCKS, BEFORE THE LORD; BUT THE
LORD WAS NOT IN THE WIND.—AND AF-
TER THE WIND AN EARTHQUAKE; BUT
THE LORD WAS NOT IN THE EARTHQUAKE
—AND AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE A FIRE;
BUT THE LORD WAS NOT IN THE FIRE.—
AND AFTER THE FIRE—A STILL SMALL
VOICE.

IT is superfluous to inform a Christian
audience, that the sublime passage,
which has now been read, forms the de-

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scription

scription of a remarkable manifestation of the Deity to the great Prophet Elijah.— That we may, however, the more fully apprehend the propriety of those circumstances which distinguish *this* from every former appearance of the Divine Glory, recorded in the Holy Scriptures, it will be necessary to consider at some length the time, and the occasion of it.

Immediately on their revolt from the grand-son of David, the ten tribes began to forsake the worship of that supreme Being, who condescended to be called, in a peculiar sense, *their* God, and the God of *their fathers*. The mistaken policy of their rulers fostered the idolatry of its own begetting, till its size overshadowed the land: and the whole people, deserting the altar of their *living strength*, transferred their senseless homage to the gods of the Heathen. But they were not yet able to fatigue the mercy and long suffering of their heavenly Father. Still were they followed by his grace; and from time to time they

they heard the warning voice of his prophets commissioned, by representing the sad consequences of perseverance in rebellion, to recall them to duty and to favour.

The powers which the Almighty gave to his ministers were suited to the nature and difficulty of the work which he confided to their execution. In the reign of Ahab, when the national depravity was at its greatest height, and every former effort to reclaim had proved ineffectual, the Divine Wisdom investing Elijah with a larger portion of the Spirit than had been communicated to any of the prophetic successors of Moses, sent him forth as the herald of repentance, and the accomplished champion of religious truth.

The conflict, which the zealous servant of Heaven had to sustain, was arduous and doubtful. All the orders of the state, divided on other occasions by distinct interests, and consequently by hostile passions, against the cause of God, were unhappily

united. The prophet indeed represented this corrupt confederacy as too general, when he mentioned himself as the sole exception to it. But, of *the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal*, while the rest were contented with the secret indulgence of their own pious rectitude, *he* alone had the boldness openly to oppose the popular and regal superstition.

For the part which he was to support, the character of this illustrious prophet most eminently qualified him. Naturally sanguine and intrepid, he was lifted by the conscious dignity of his office, and a warm sense of the offended majesty of his God, above the more trifling considerations, and the softer weaknesses of humanity. On his first appearance in the sacred volume, we find him denouncing a severe judgment on Ahab and his kingdom; and, as it were by his own authority, shutting up *the windows of Heaven*

¹ 1 Kings, xix. 18.

—when,

—when, by his Divine Master, who was unwilling to destroy, though obliged to punish, he is commanded to shew himself, after three years of rigid drought, to the corrected monarch, he seizes on the moment of national humiliation, to vindicate the honour, and re-establish the worship of Jehovah.

The event of his public contest with the priests of Baal was answerable to his designs. The people, unable to resist the splendid evidence which was indulged on that great occasion, acknowledged the Lord for their God: and the prophet, in right of his high office, which superseded the regal, inflicted on the vanquished idolaters the sentence of the divine law.

The consequence of this return of the people to God, was the removal of that scourge under which they had so long suffered: and it was now reasonable for the prophet, as the instrument of so great a blessing, to expect the gratitude of a

whole nation, which he had manifestly restored to the immediate protection of its Heavenly Sovereign. His expectations, however, proved vain. Ahab, indeed, seems to have partaken in the general conversion—but his queen was more irritated by the slaughter of her priests, than convinced by the miracle which preceded it; and the great Benefactor of Israel—the servant of the MOST HIGH, was again compelled to provide for his safety by flight.

In this situation, wounded by the ingratitude of his country, and wearied with his opposition to the still recoiling torrent of irreligion, he presses for his discharge from his master's service, and *rather impatiently* solicits that he may die. But the gracious Lord is pleased to pardon the infirmity of his creature, and, granting him a supply of supernatural strength, conducts him by a journey of forty days, to the mountain of Horeb.

It

It was in this place, which the Deity had formerly hallowed with his peculiar presence, at the giving of the law, that he now determined to instruct his minister in some great truths, with which it was necessary for him to be acquainted.

Under the dispensation of the law, the Almighty had hitherto appeared principally as a God of terrors. Every manifestation of himself had been calculated to awaken the most awful apprehensions of his *power*; and his laws, denouncing against all wilful transgression inevitable punishment, bespoke him a *consuming*^a fire. But the great plan of Providence was now advancing to maturity; and the minds of men were gradually preparing for a new dispensation. The Almighty was soon to lay aside his crown of terrors; and, diminishing by the appointment of a PERPETUAL MEDIATOR, the alarming distance between his own supreme holiness,

^a Deut. iv. 24.

and the imperfection of humanity, he was to appear with the countenance of a *father*, rather than a *sovereign*:—to allure by *persuasion*, and not to govern by *fear*:—to speak softly to the *reason*, and not to thunder to the *sense*.

To convey this information to the prophet, and to intimate that, while power was an attribute, and severity an accident only of the Divine Nature, goodness was its essence, and mercy its appropriate character;—the Deity, adopting the striking form of symbolical representation, discloses himself in the remarkable manner, related in the text.

No sooner had Elijah reached the sacred mountain, than he is summoned to stand before *the Lord*. All nature confesses the approaching GOD! HE comes, armed as the OMNIPOTENT with all the force of the elements!—the *mountains are rent*, and the *rocks broken in pieces*.—After the wind there is an earthquake, and after the earthquake

quake a fire! these formidable appearances, however, do not, as they did in former times, betoken the immediate presence of the Most High. *The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire.*—Behind these instruments of his power, is the INVISIBLE ³ KING; and divested of his terrors, only speaks to Elijah's ear, *in a still small voice*—the superior divinity of this species of manifestation is attested by the conduct of the prophet.—Not affected by the preceding disorder of the elements, he no sooner hears this HEAVENLY VOICE, than struck with sacred dread, he acknowledges the PRESENT GOD, and *wraps his face in his mantle.*

As my construction of this celebrated passage is supported by the opinion of the best commentators, I shall take occasion from it to consider the two great dispensations;—the Jewish and the Christian; in the former of which, *the whirlwind, the*

³ 1 Tim. i. 17.

earthquake, and the fire, were the forerunners of the Deity, whose immediate presence is discovered in the *latter*, not obvious to our senses, but addressing our reason in a *still small voice*. A little attention to the subject will convince us, that *the divers manners in which God has spoken to man*, far from being inconsistent with the unchangeableness of the Divine Nature, are evidently accommodations of one mighty scheme to the varying circumstances of the creature for whom it was formed. The *tempest* and the *fire* were the *ministers of God*—but his more ESSENTIAL DIVINITY whispered in the *voice*.

The objects of our discussion necessarily embrace a large view of the moral government of THE HOLY ONE, and as it is revealed to us in the sacred writings, it readily offers itself to our examination.

Man came from the hands of his Creator, endued with all the perfection of which his

4 Heb. i. 1.

two-fold and middle nature was susceptible.—His *intellectual*, strong, clear, and active, was formed after the distant resemblance of its glorious original.—His *material*, untainted with disease, and undebased by the consequences of sin, was the *companion*, rather than the *goal* of the Spirit which informed it—he maintained a familiar intercourse with God—he felt God in all his faculties—he beheld God impressed on every object around him—in the frame of the universe he acknowledged the wisdom, and the power of the *Creator*—in the beauty of moral excellence, he was enamoured of the goodness and the loveliness of the *parent*. The native force of his judgment baffled the weak assaults of passion;—and it was not difficult for him to continue in that course of pure obedience, in which, of all his posterity, ONE only has ever been able to persevere.

He broke, however, the easy condition under which he held his happy state; and became

became obnoxious to the penalty annexed to his violation of law,—eternal death. But from this he was exempted by the imputed merits of a MESSIAH. And at this period immediately commences that awful plan of SUPREME JUSTICE AND MERCY, which was to receive its full perfection from the actual obedience and sacrifice of Christ—that *LAMB, which was slain from the foundation of the world.*

The severer penalty incurred by man's transgression was indeed remitted. But the consequences of his fall were still numerous and melancholy. The sovereignty of his reason was weakened. The subject, appetites, and passions, gathered strength. The source of human kind was polluted. The necessity of temporal death was induced. And the incursion of sin to ravage and deface the moral world was so rapid and successful, that in the course of a few generations,

generations, *all flesh* ⁶ *had corrupted his way upon the earth.*

In this sad condition of things, when the creature ceased to be fit for the rational purposes of his creation:--when persuasion, and warning, and threatning, (all the methods by which the Deity could influence the conduct of *free-agents*,) were ineffectual to revive obedience, the righteous God determined, by an exemplary judgment, to check the daring disorder. One family, which, amidst the general corruption, had maintained its integrity, was alone preserved; while the rest of the human species were swept away from a world, which they had filled with violence and pollution.

From this awful period the wickedness of man never attained the same fierce and extended dominion. But to impiety succeeded superstition. And the characters

⁶ Gen. vi. 12.

of the Creator were by the heavy hand of ignorance quickly erased from the mind of the creature. It is a fact equally surprizing and authentic, that in little more than four hundred years after the Flood, when they, who had been saved in the Ark, and with whom God had renewed his covenant, were yet living—idolatry was the prevailing religion of the world.

The source of this monstrous depravity it is not difficult to find. The human imagination fainting under the immensity of a Being purely spiritual and infinitely extended, applied to corporeal symbols for the support of its infirmity.—That the Sun was selected for the first object of erroneous worship, as the brightest representative of that glorious light, with which the ORACLE OF GOD was always invested,—is a conjecture in the highest degree probable and happy. But the religious homage, withdrawn from its only rightful object, was soon paid to things
the

the most indifferent, and the most base. And the earth was loaded with shrines, which, raised by *fear*, were usually frequented by *corruption*.

At this juncture, before the darkness became universal, and when the efficacy of tradition, already unequal to the general preservation of truth, was to be weakened by the reduced period of man's life, the Deity was pleased to sanctify to himself a peculiar people, with whom he might place his *incommunicable* ⁷ name, and his written revelations; and from whom, in the season determined by his counsels, he might call forth the blessedness of his gospel kingdom. The intire plan was worthy of the Divine Wisdom from whence it sprung, nor can any other be conceived, from which the same happy issue could with equal reason be expected.

Amid the uproar of Antediluvian outrage, *the still small voice* had never caught

⁷ Wisdom xiv. 21.

the ear.—With that enormous growth of human wickedness *the Spirit^s of the Lord had long striven in vain.*—Nor to those generations which immediately succeeded the Flood, could the gospel have been offered with a stronger probability of establishment.

The great expiation for sin, by the death of the MESSIAH, might, indeed, at any time have been made; and the testimony of miraculous power would at any time have proclaimed the incarnation of God. But in ages of intellectual immaturity, when unstrengthened by its own exertions, the mind was in a state of infant imperfection,—with what prospect of success could the DIVINE TEACHER have proposed his system to the world? With what arguments could he have inculcated to the necessitous savage, occupied and oppressed by the first rude cares of commencing society, the supreme beauty of

^s Gen. vi. 3.

holiness;—the destructive enormity of sin;—the incapacity of man's own powers to stand without the divine grace;—the insufficiency of the torch of nature to light the paths of truth, and duty;—the consequent necessity of revelation;—and the sublime wisdom discovered in the mysterious œconomy of redemption?—to none could the REDEEMER have made his *sufferings* intelligible. And if his miracles, his doctrines, and his life had spoken to the understandings, and the hearts of a few—the narrow limits of the enlightened circle, yielding to the constant pressure of the surrounding darkness, would soon have disappeared: and thus the moral, and intellectual beam of the gospel, instead of meliorating the earth with its vital and still increasing influence, would have shed only a pale and momentary lustre over the returning night.

The Almighty, therefore, pleased rather to *fashion* than to *create*;—to direct the wanderings of free-agency than to suspend

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its

its course, determined that the human mind should be fermented into clearness; and ripened into strength;—that man, with his full powers, should be made sensible of his weakness; and that a series of events, and of prophecies, should awaken expectation, and more directly point to the accomplishment of the divine counsels, before the Messiah was manifested on earth.

For these purposes—leaving the body of mankind to the laws of nature, by them to be absolved or condemned, the Deity proceeded to establish the wonderful fabric of his Church. And that his hand in raising it might be more eminently conspicuous, he founded it not on the bulk of any large nations, but on the approved faith, and *imputed* righteousness of an individual, chosen from an idolatrous family.

To Abraham, the elected father of the faithful, whose virtues were thus made the

the source of universal blessing, so much of the plan of Providence was revealed, as suited his circumstances and comprehension.—*The gospel* ⁹ *was obscurely preached to him.—He saw at a distance the day* ¹⁰ *of the Lord—and was glad.* But, indulged with a view of the promises ¹¹ *afar off*, he was rewarded immediately with temporal advantages: and he received in the birth of his Son Isaac a sufficient earnest of the divine power and truth. To the son and grandson of this righteous person, God continued his especial favour,—granting them a confirmation of his promises, and an increase of their worldly possessions.

When the numbers of the adopted family were considerably enlarged, their Heavenly Father removed them from the jealousy of the small states of Canaan, to the populous kingdom of Ægypt:—there, remote from observation, to ripen into a great nation;—and from thence to be

⁹ Gal. iii. 8. ¹⁰ John. viii. 56. ¹¹ Heb. xi. 13.

taken by the exerted Arm of Omnipotence.

If the separation of a peculiar people was admirably adapted to the designs of Providence;—in every step by which the measure advanced to its accomplishment, the same character of supreme contrivance may be distinctly traced, from the earliest establishment to the completion, and consequent abrogation of the Jewish system; the great object of the institution is seldom out of sight. No leading event is of *private* or *single interpretation*. Every one has its more immediate, and its more remote reference: and having effected one purpose is manifestly calculated to effect another. The machine consists of many wheels; each with its independent action, yet each contributing to the general movement: and from the various combination result order and unity.

The dispensation opens, and concludes with acts wonderfully alike. For the offering

fering of his only son, by which the obedience of Abraham was so fully ascertained, bears the most direct allusion to the sacrifice of the Messiah.—The wanderings of the Patriarchs *as pilgrims* ¹³ *and strangers on the earth*, by which their faith was exercised and increased; and the long course of varied discipline in the wilderness, by which the perverseness of their descendants was punished and reclaimed—are replete with *Christian* edification.—*these things happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for* ¹⁴ *our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come.*

That wisdom which makes a single act fruitful of many ends; and that holy hand which always tempers severity with justice, are every where distinguishable—even in occurrences which at the first glance may seem to contradict the Divine Attributes.

¹³ Heb. xi. 13.

¹⁴ 1 Cor. x. 11.

When the elect family, grown into a large people, are to be taken from the midst of another nation, that display of miraculous power which was equally necessary to effect their deliverance, and to impress on their rude minds a proper reverence for their Supreme Law-giver, is righteously exerted for the correction of an impious tyrant, when the establishment of the same favoured people, in the land promised to their forefathers, is to be accomplished,—It is—When *the iniquity of the ¹⁵ Amorites is full* ;—when successive generations, by fostering the adopted sins of their predecessors, are become the just objects of divine wrath,—that the same sword of extirpation removes from the church of God the neighbourhood of idolatry, and punishes the collected wickedness of more than four hundred years.

But in the immediate structure of the law we shall have still more reason to admire the hand of its heavenly founder,

¹⁵ Gen 3. 16.

To

To dispose the human mind for the reception of a system like the Christian, the attributes of the Deity most necessary to be inculcated are his unity, his power, and his holiness. To fasten these on the hearts of a people, unenlightened, and intractable, the chief engines must be the passions; and of the passions—fear, as the most forcible and compelling.—With this key the recesses of the law stand intirely displayed.

The terrors which accompanied its promulgation; the jealousy with which it guarded every approach to idolatry: its train of moral and ceremonial precepts: its sanctions of present rewards and punishments; the perfect ¹⁶ obedience which it exacted: the inevitable chastisement with which it followed ¹⁷ presumptuous transgression: the expiation by vicarious suffering which it demanded even for ca-

¹⁶ Lev. xviii. 5. Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 11.

¹⁷ Num. xv. 30. 31. Some mitigations of this rigor are specified, Lev. vi.

fual offence, and involuntary pollution: the very construction of its sanctuary; and the glorious locality of its Infinite Author,—were all admirably calculated to press upon the senses those awful truths,—that GOD is ONE; that he is supremely powerful;—that *he is of purer eyes*¹⁸ *than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity.* But if the Law, by its *general influence*, modelled the mind for the spiritual perfection of the Gospel; by its particular ordinances it clearly announced the dispensation which it was formed to introduce. Without the comment of the new covenant, much of the Mosaic code would be imperfectly intelligible.—But lighted *by the star*¹⁹ *which came out of Jacob*, we are able to ascertain the fitness of every part of the divine institution.

Not to insist on smaller instances;—in the mediator by whom the law was dispensed;—the universal expiation by blood;

¹⁸ Heb. i. 13.

¹⁹ Numb. xxiv. 17.

—the

—the sacrifice of the paschal lamb;—the great annual atonement for the people;—the office, and holiness of the high priest —we see, strongly shadowed out to us, the sublime mysteries of Christian theology.

We may discern, likewise, the same predominating feature of the introductory system wrought into the texture of its civil, as well as its religious constitution, The division of the people into tribes; the laws respecting virginity and marriage; the limited right of alienation given to the land-holder;—the power of redemption reserved to the nearest of kin; and the certain return after a stated period of alienated property, — regulations evidently made for the preservation, and the distinction of families,—could be intended only the more accurately to determine the notices of mankind to the birth of the approaching Messiah.

But

But in the Jewish dispensation, besides the law, there was another instance of the divine communication indulged in PROPHESY.

Whether those servants of God, ²⁰ *who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, threatened woes, or promised blessings, their object, in subserviency to the views of the MOST HIGH, was to maintain the cause of true religion, and to proclaim the spiritual kingdom which was advancing.

The admirable wisdom with which these sacred oracles are adapted to the growing capacity, and the varying situation of man, has frequently been the just subject of wonder. Calculated at first only to rouse ignorant expectation, at last they are sufficient to gratify reasonable curiosity. From the dark hint of a Redeemer, suggested at the fall, they gradually brighten:—till in a blaze of light they disclose the ²¹ *desire*

²⁰ 2 Pet. i. 21.

²¹ Hag. ii. 7.

of all nations ;—the angel of the ²² covenant in his three-fold character of KING, PRIEST, and PROPHET,—suffering—yet triumphant ;—by humiliation exalted ; in full performance of the promise made to Abraham, removing the temporary wall of separation ;—claiming ²³ the Heathen for his inheritance ;—filling the earth with the knowledge ²⁴ of the Lord ;—pouring out his Spirit on all ²⁵ flesh ;—and, in the bold imagery of the east, creating ²⁶ new Heavens and a new earth.

When prophecy had thus executed its office it was (a) silent, as before the formation of the first man.—Before the appearance of man's Great Restorer, there was an awful and mysterious pause.—Heaven seemed to be preparing for the wondrous

²² Mal. iii. 1. ²³ Psalm ii. 8. ²⁴ Isa. xi. 9.

²⁵ Joel ii. 28. ²⁶ Isa. lxv. 17.—Rev. xxi. 1.

(a) Between Malachi, the last prophet under the old covenant, and the birth of Christ, there was an interval of more than 400 years.

consummation: and the Holy Spirit to retire from a world, which he was soon to re-visit in a fuller tide of illumination and power.

If we now reflect on what has been advanced, we must allow that the ways of God to man have been uniformly good, equal, holy, and worthy of the Supreme Governor of the world.

When the irruption of sin deformed what he had created fair and perfect, his wisdom devised the means of restoring man to the capacity of that immortal life, which the violation of law had forfeited. But as sin, consistently with the immutable holiness of the Divine nature, could never be admitted into the kingdom of God; and as the Deity, without resuming the freedom which he had given, and which alone constituted moral agency, could not by his own over-ruling power destroy sin,—to restore man to the *capacity*

city of happiness, was all that the SUPREME MERCY could effect. Unable, however, to *force* upon the free creature the blessings it extended to him, it not only placed them within his attainment, but it urged him by every method short of *compulsion* to receive them.

With his rebellious subjects, God was graciously pleased to open the most direct and sensible intercourse. He placed among them his glorious presence and his oracle. More expressly to declare his will; and to persuade to duty with arguments which might come more immediately home to their bosoms, he raised up in the midst of them preachers, and prophets, *men*²⁷ *of like passions with themselves.*

When human corruption at length prevailed against the divine grace, and the spreading darkness threatened the total extinction of moral and religious light, God

²⁷ Acts xiv. 15.

erected the Jewish system, and established it as the fortress of retiring holiness. This last hold against the victorious, and overwhelming degeneracy, he provided with all the possible means of defence. *Around it he stationed carnal ordinances; and in its support he engaged the senses; and the passions, insisted in the service of truth. Within he planted his glory, and his terrors. There did his royalty appear throned in light between the Cherubims:—there was his great and strong wind, his earthquake, and his fire.*

Nor in this peculiar dispensation can the impartiality of God be justly arraigned. If, for the wise purposes which we have stated,—he condescended for a time to be the *local* God of the Hebrews;—he was no less, though in a different form, the God of other nations. If his *manifested presence* was restricted to Jerusalem, he left himself not without ^{as} witness in the

^{as} Acts xiv. 17.

world, but with his *providential presence* presided over all his works.—To his own people indeed, he imparted written laws, and on their obedience he conferred particular blessings. But on their disobedience he inflicted particular penalties;—and, confining the promised reward, as well as the threatened punishment, to the present state of existence, he opened the road of future salvation *indiscriminately* to the endeavours of the just.—*For the law* ²⁹ *alone could not give life, neither was the promise* ³⁰ *through the law;—and the covenant of mercy, dispensed at the fall, extending equally to the Gentile, and the Jew, since re-obedience to the commandments, written on the* *fleshy* ³¹ *tables of the heart, by the same finger which wrote on the tables of stone delivered from Sinai,—must certainly have been effectual for the attainment of a happy immortality.*

²⁹ Gal. iii. 21. ³⁰ Rom. iv. 13. ³¹ 2 Cor. iii. 3.

The distinction, therefore, occasioned by the Jewish separation, was immaterial.—And, as inferior advantage was undoubtedly compensated with smaller exaction, it was not incompatible with the supreme righteousness of God.—Soon, however, it was to be removed:—and, when the operation of second causes had prepared the way for the great event,—*God was to appear ³² out of Sion in perfect beauty.* By the manhood of the world he was *to be worshipped ³³ in spirit and in truth.*—The laws of nature, and of Moses, were to be superseded by a more pure, and spiritual code.—Life, and *immortality, were to be brought ³⁴ to light by the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST.*—And *all flesh was to see ³⁵ the salvation of our God.*

Let us here, my Christian Brethren, raise our eyes in wondering adoration; to

³² Psalm. l. 2.

³³ John iv. 24.

³⁴ 2 Tim. i. 10.

³⁵ Luke iii. 6.

that

that FIRST OF BEINGS, whose ways have been the subjects of our attention!—let us endeavour to lift ourselves to a distant contemplation of that POWER—which from the void abyfs could call the greatness, and the beauty of nature;—of that WISDOM, which could adjust, with such inimitable contrivance, every part of the stupendous machine;—of that GOODNESS which, streaming through innumerable worlds, could every where kindle solely for the communication of enjoyment, the sensible, warm motion of existence, and the bright illumination of reason!

Overwhelmed with the vastness of the DIVINE PERFECTION, let us then behold that POWER,—that WISDOM, and that GOODNESS narrowed (if the bold inaccuracy may be allowed) to the object of HUMAN HAPPINESS,—saving us from the rigid claim of justice;—condescending to war against our corruptions;—forming system after system, to bring us

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to that holiness, without which ³⁶ it is impossible to see GOD!—By this view of the DIVINE LOVE, what sensations will not be awakened in our bosoms—of conscious unworthiness on the part of MAN,—and to HIM, from whom proceeds this succession of mercies,—of strong and ardent gratitude!

But wherefore talk we of *succession*?—is it not ALMIGHTY! because THOU art great and wonderful beyond the imperfection of human language to express, or of human imagination to conceive?—Yes LORD!—our reason acknowledges thee as operating without *successive action*; and at rest thyself, imparting by *one volition*, energy, and government to millions of systems!—We know that to THEE there is neither *past* nor *future*:—that eternity, with all its crowded ranks, stands immediately before thee:—that every possible combination, resulting from the agency of

³⁶ Heb. xii. 14.

intelligence and freedom, throughout the infinity of space, is distinctly in thy sight.—That *in one instant* are present with THEE, creation and redemption;—the birth and the expiration of time.—That to THINE EYE Hell is *already* for ever closed; and Heaven has *already* received its blessed multitude.—That *at this moment* thou hearest thy redeemed of *all* ³⁷ *nations, and kindreds, and people, as they circle thy throne, and cast before thee their crowns of gold, saying, holy, ³⁸ holy, holy* LORD GOD ALMIGHTY! *great and marvellous are thy works—just and true are thy ways, THOU KING OF SAINTS!*

Yes, GLORIOUS INCOMPREHENSIBLE!—in these truths our *understandings* acquiesce.—But our *tongues* can discourse of thee, and our *imagination*s approach thee only as *progressive*: as *speaking to us at sundry times and in divers manners*:—as consulting by dispensation, *following* dispen-

³⁷ Rev. vii, 9.³⁸ Rev. iv. 8.

sation, the happiness of thy free subjects;—as leading on thy wise, and righteous plans, from *beginning to completion*; and in thy accommodations of them advancing from *weakness to maturity*, and from *sense to reason*.

O, then,—*exalted as thou* ³⁹ *art far above all blessings*, accept our imperfect though fervent praise! O, deign to listen while we hail thee as the Parent of *successive mercies*!—while we adore thee as now giving thy laws in thunder from SINAI; and now speaking in *thy still, small voice* from SION!—while we bless thee as the Creator and the Judge of Adam; as the preserver of Noah; as the God of Abraham; and above all—as the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST!—O, graciously attend, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY! while we give thanks to thee, as to HIM *who was*; ⁴⁰ *and is, and is to*

³⁹ Neh. ix. 5.

⁴⁰ Rev. iv. 8:

come,

*come; and say, blessing, and 4th honour,
and glory be unto THEE that fittest on
the Throne, and unto THE LAMB for
ever and ever.*

4th Rev. v. 13.

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SER.

S E R M O N IX.

On the CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION,

1 KINGS XIX. 12.

AND AFTER THE FIRE—A STILL SMALL
VOICE.

GUIDED by the light of revelation, we have followed the dispensations of God from the creation to the establishment of the Jewish peculiarity;—and we have seen that they are in no respect inconsistent with the perfections of the Divine Nature;—with its unchangeableness,—its holiness,—or its goodness. We have observed, that by the adoption of one nation, without essentially violating the

equality of his other subjects, the Deity provided most wisely for the preservation of religion: and that by addressing the senses, and finding sanctions for his laws in the passions of a rude people, he took the most effectual means of securing their obedience.

We are now advanced to a period of another aspect,—less *sensibly* awful perhaps;—but more *truly* sublime,—more beautiful,—more divine! the HEAVENLY GRACE, which lately walked with severity and terror,—is now associated with benignity and love. The DIVINITY, which was before in some respects *local*,—is now diffused, *in the beauty¹ of holiness*, over the earth.—That BEING who *dwells² in inaccessible light*, and who lately dispensed his laws, by the ³ ministry of angels, is now visible, and speaking to us by ⁴ HIS SON!—*the wind is hushed*; the earth no

¹ 1 Chron. xvi. 29.

² 1 Tim. vi. 16.

³ 3 Acts vii. 53.—Heb. ii. 2.

⁴ Heb. i. 2.

longer trembles, the fire hath ceased to rage! and the STILL SMALL VOICE declares the immediate presence of the God.—Yes—announced by prophesy!—introduced by a whole system!—demanded by the expectations, and the wants of a world!—with his blood to expiate;—by his doctrine to reform;—by his spirit to enlarge and enlighten;—with his grace to comfort, and support, THE ⁵ BRIGHTNESS OF THE FATHER'S GLORY IS COME!

Before we proceed to the character of that religion which this Divine Person brought from heaven to promulgate on earth, let us examine those concurring circumstances which adapted the period chosen for his manifestation to the leading objects of that great event.—*When the fullness⁶ of the time was come God sent forth his son.*—A short inquiry will satisfy us what the Apostle intended by the *fullness of the time*,

⁵ Heb. i. 3.

⁶ Gal. iv. 4.

After

After the convulsion of the deluge, man must necessarily have remained long in ignorance and barbarism. Struggling with the wants of infant society, and wholly intent on those first rude arts which were most essential to subsistence, the human mind would have neither leisure nor inclination to wander in search of refinement.

We find, accordingly, that the earth was re-peopled with a race of hunters, husbandmen, and shepherds. And we know that in consequence of these coarser employments, so gross a darkness prevailed, that even the worship of the ONE GOD, propagated by the family of Noah, and inculcated with so much force by the late awful catastrophe, was almost entirely lost.

In those countries, whose situation, and fertility of soil invited early occupation, and, by exacting less labour, lightened the pressure of necessity, man made his first

first distant approaches to liberal knowledge. Assyria and Ægypt were the cradles of the sciences. And in the latter they are reported to have attained considerable growth. But plunged in the deep mists of antiquity, their size may appear greatly enlarged. And it is probable that the Egyptians, like all the nations of the east, satisfied with an inroad into the realms of intellectual improvement, never attempted to advance far beyond the frontiers.

From the monuments of this people, which have resisted the enmity of time, we may collect abundant evidence of their power, but none of their skill.—Their arts appear to have been carried not further than the first rudiments; and the condition of their sciences, enveloped in profound mystery, may be considered as justly liable to suspicion.

To Ægypt, however, the world is largely indebted;—if, following the dim
lights

lights of those early ages, we are right in declaring, that from thence issued politeness and letters, in their progress to Greece.—In this country,—placed under a mild and pure sky, and broken into a cluster of small popular states, where the clashings of interest roused every energy of soul, and the jealousies of competition actuated the strongest nerve of exertion—by the fortunate concurrence of climate, of situation, and of institution—the mind of man was raised to a height, which before it never reached, and since has never exceeded.

As Judæa was of religious knowledge;—Greece may be regarded as the citadel of human literature, and refinement:—from whence, by colonization, or conquest, they sallied forth to enlighten a wide portion of the world. Sicily, the coasts of Italy, and of Asia Minor, were already visited by Grecian improvement, when Providence employed the ambition of Alexander to extend it over the east.

If

If the success of this wonderful man may justly be ascribed to human policy, as to *its second cause*,—that arm, which, after the immature death of the conqueror, and amid the furious dissensions of his successors, could *establish conquests*—effected with such rapidity, and stretched by so small a number over regions of such extent and population—must certainly be *immediately the divine*.

The good effects resulting from this revolution were long felt. For a considerable time, the Grecian literature prevailed from the Hellespont to the Indus. And when driven by the Parthian revolt from *one half* of this immense tract,—besides retaining some posts under the Barbarian domination, it supported itself in full vigor, and continued to flourish for many successive centuries *in the other*.

From this diffusion of intellectual light, *eventually* of the highest importance to religion, there sprung a circumstance which
was

was immediately subservient to the cause of truth.

The distant situation of the Jews had hitherto, in a great degree, secluded them from the observation of the Europeans; but Greece was now advanced to the neighbourhood of Judea, and must necessarily be struck by the peculiar fabric of its civil and religious polity.

It was in consequence of this excited attention, that the literary vanity of the second Grecian Monarch of Ægypt procured an authentic version of the Hebrew scriptures;—and thus undesignedly withdrew them in a state of unsuspected purity, from the *possible* practices, in a later age, of Jewish infidelity.

The *eastern* world was now, in a great measure, Grecian.—But the far larger part of the *western* was still *uncultivated*, and *barbarian*.—To complete, therefore, the plan of general civilization, Providence

dence thought fit to employ another instrument.

From beginnings so inconsiderable as almost to elude the search of the historian,—an Italian city advances with firm, and equal pace, to the summit of imperial power. No where is the action of the SUPREME HAND more unquestionably apparent, than in raising the proud bulk of Roman greatness. Peace and war are almost equally favourable to its growth. By victory it gains astonishing accession;—from defeat it suffers no diminution. The wealth, and the population of Asia; the valour, the discipline, and the genius of Europe, are alike ineffectual to check its steady progression. The wise and jealous spirit with which Greece had hitherto maintained among her states at home, and her kingdoms abroad, a just balance of dominion—is now asleep, and never thinks of opposing itself to the encroachments of this overbearing stranger. Without interruption, the torrent of Rome spread
itself

itself on all sides over the richest, and, as it was then imperfectly known, over the largest part of the globe. And the rude independence which she infringed, the generous city every where compensated by the communication of her laws, and the advantages of ripened society.

The world at this extraordinary crisis offers to our view a curious and magnificent object.

Greece, with her colonies and conquests, was within the circuit of the Roman Empire. But the literature and language of the vanquished prevailed over the power of the victor, and accompanied the march of his triumphs. In all the provinces were formed institutions for the propagation of Grecian letters. Spain, Gaul, and even Britain could boast of its little Athens. (a)

Rhetoric

(a) The learned reader will perceive that I have antedated, by a few years, this extreme diffusion of literature. Seminaries for the instruction of youth were first

Rhetoric and philosophy walked in those groves which lately were horrid with superstition. And from Euphrates to the western ocean; from Atlas to the Caledonian waste, the human intellect—vigorous, inquisitive, subtle, and furnished with arms, exulted in the consciousness of its maturity.

It was unable, however, to ascertain, not only the attributes of God, but the duties of man: and, while its strongest rays shed only *visible darkness* over the world of religion, they shone with unfruitful lustre on the neighbouring one of morality.

first established in Britain by Agricola, in the reign of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian; but a taste for letters was almost instantaneously propagated through the whole extent of the Island; if any credit may be given to a cotemporary Poet, the passion for refinement and science extended in his days to Thule, that extremity of antient Europe.

Gallia caufidicos docuit facunda Britannos,
De conducendo loquitur jam rhetore Thule.

Juv. Sat. xv. 111.

The

The first and leading occupation of philosophy was to pursue the phenomena of nature. And when Socrates brought her down from Heaven to dwell among men, she was far less prosperous in her new than in her former more elevated province. To trace nature to her secret recesses;—to discover the government of the tides,—the order, and the courses of the planets—she found to be an easier labour than to controul the fury of the passions, and to correct the noxious luxuriance of the heart. She soon, therefore, desisted from the discouraging attempt:—and too weak to rectify the crookedness of the mind, contented herself with adding brightness to its polish, and sharpness to its edge.

The notoriety of the fact makes it superfluous to remark, that never was the unhappy race of man plunged in superstition more abject, nor in profligacy more gross than at this æra of intellectual exaltation. Whether we consult the poets or the ora-

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tors,

tors, the philosophers or the historians of those ages, we shall be convinced, that the colours in which St. Paul has given us a portrait of Heathen degeneracy, are by no means overcharged. Without the Divine assistance, humanity was too feeble to stand: and even the *knowledge* of God was of *itself* insufficient to support it—for we know that the Jews had violated the *written*, as flagrantly as the Gentiles had the *natural* law; and that purer morality was not the consequence of superior information.

At this singular juncture of extended intelligence, and general depravity, when so large a proportion of the human species was connected by the same government and language; when investigated error must certainly be detected; but, when contested truth would be more firmly settled, and more rapidly propagated—THE SON OF THE ⁷ LIVING GOD came to offer his system of holiness, and of life.

⁷ Matt. xvi. 16.

The

The wisdom, which determined *this* to be the *fullness of the time*, was completely justified by the event.

With many difficulties to encounter, the victory of the Gospel was brilliant and decisive. After a long and severe conflict, Christianity was seated by her great Author, on the throne of the Cæsars; and from thence diffused her meliorating influence far beyond the wide limits of the Roman power. When she was thus established in her sovereignty, that great political union which had favoured her success was immediately dissolved; and her subjects were divided into numerous societies, of a size better adapted to the ends of human happiness and perfection.

Let us now proceed to the character of this triumphant religion, and enquire with what propriety it can be considered as the *still small voice of God*. The enquiry will lead us to contemplate its most obvious

and discriminating features—its SPIRITUALITY—its MILDNESS—and its HOLINESS.

In the Jewish dispensation, as we have already observed, every thing was accommodated to *the senses*. Bloody sacrifices, a long ritual of carnal ordinances; the blaze of manifested and local divinity, exercised attention, and commanded obedience; but, in the Gospel kingdom, the intercourse of God is maintained altogether with the *reason*. Excepting for the short term during which supernatural power was indulged for the support of her infancy, Christianity can boast of no prophecy, no miracles, no direct and sensible communication of *the* ⁸ *excellent glory*. In her train are neither striking nor oppressive ceremonies. She worships God in spirit and in truth. Her temple is the globe; her devotion the service of the heart. On her steps wait silence and re-

⁸ 2 Pet. i. 17.

pose! but it is A REPOSE which affects with divine energy;—and a SILENCE,—which to the ear of reason discourses of Heaven!

When the mind of man is relieved from those difficulties with which, in the first process of society, it is doomed to struggle, and has reached its full stature, it is yet incapable, as experience assures us, of attaining to any degree of religious truth—the LOFTINESS OF GOD is still far beyond it; and any just conceptions of the Divine Nature can *originally* be derived from no other source than that of *immediate revelation*.

But, the miraculous intercourse at first requisite to inform the ignorance, and subdue the hardness of man, when withdrawn in the succeeding periods of his enlarged and cultivated faculties, becomes the subject of his faith, and the instruction of his piety.

To call Abraham from his friends, his country, and the superstition of his fathers, nothing less than the direct disclosure of the Deity could be effectual. To induce the immediate successors of this righteous person to wander without *any continuing*⁹ *city, in the remote expectation of ONE to come*, the same indulgence of VISIBLE DIVINITY must necessarily be prolonged. To exact from a rude people entire obedience to the orders of *an equal*, who was leading them to apparent destruction; and, without the awful sanctions of eternity, to compel their submission to laws the most novel, the most rigid; and in part, at the time of their promulgation, the most seemingly unmeaning—OMNIPOTENCE, must descend in flames,—must articulate in thunder,—must permit some similitude of his glory to be resident on earth.

But, in after ages, *the evidence alone of*

⁹ Heb. xiii. 14.

these wonders is sufficient for the wise and gracious purposes of God.

Man, with his powers fully expanded, and informed by the preceding communication, can hold *spiritual* converse with his Maker : and following through all its beautiful intricacies the simplicity of the divine plan, can embrace with his reason the offspring of the supreme wisdom.—Prophecy cannot with propriety obtain a place in the Christian dispensation, which it was its office only to introduce;—and the mind in its manhood, supported by Moses, the Prophets and the Evangelists, cannot require those assistances which its infancy might demand. Invigorated with the soft influences of grace, and with its natural sight improved by revelation, it can walk ¹⁰ *like the Patriarch with God*, it can see Him who ¹¹ *is invisible*, and, undiverted by the present, can look steadily forward to that INFINITE FUTURE, the

¹⁰ Gen. vi. 9.

¹¹ Heb. xi. 27.

glories of which are to recompence its persevering rectitude.

Let us not then be told, with the voice of irony and triumph, that miracles are peculiar to periods of darkness;—that they are begotten by artifice on ignorance;—that with all the spectres of superstition, they vanish before the radiance of philosophy;—and that if the Supreme Being would ever manifest himself to man, otherwise than by the glory of his works, it would be to man in his most advanced progress towards perfection.

As we have already remarked, that it was in the brightest age of mental excellence, and on the most renowned theatre of the world that Christianity first appeared; and as the assistance given to its early growth, by the most striking exertion of heavenly power, is a fact which *has never been overthrown*, we might content ourselves without any further reply to these *insinuated* falsehoods: but for the wonders

ders recorded in the sacred writings of the Jews, we may argue even from the present existence and condition of that extraordinary people.

Among the various nations of the earth, there is every where distinguishable a peculiar race of men, in language, manners, religion, and even features differing from them with whom they live, without any settlement of their own; in all places *aliens*, though in many *natives*; and, like the fabulous stream of the Peloponnesian river (*a*), preserving an unblended current beneath the ocean of the world.

From this singular situation we can trace, by the light of Christian and Pagan history, the fortunes of this distinction of men, through a course of near four thousand years, to their expulsion from their own country, to their first establishment in Palestine, to their emigration out of Ægypt.

(a) The Alpheus.

We

We are made acquainted by other authors than their own, with the existence and the writings of Moses, under whose conduct they passed the desarts to Canaan; and who gave them that wonderful frame of religious constitution, from which no time, no revolutions of fortune, no severity of oppression, no hope of mitigated distress, has ever yet been able to tear them.

Possessed of this knowledge—from the strict connexion which binds one part of their sacred volume to the other;—their laws to their history—their history to their prophecies;—their prophecies to their present condition;—and their present condition to Christianity;—we may strongly infer those individual certainties, which collectively compose this whole, great, simple, majestic body of truth.

But convinced as we thus are, that the Deity has in some periods sensibly communicated with man, we are far from admitting

mitting the superiority of that dispensation, in which this species of Divine Intercourse was allowed to obtain. We consider it, on the contrary, as an indulgence to intellectual weakness; and grateful for a sufficiency of evidence, revelation, and motives to confirm our faith, enlarge our knowledge, and actuate our conduct: we rejoice that God can treat with us *as in understanding men*; we glory in the *invisible*, but gracious and *efficient* hand of our Governor; and we produce this SPIRITUALITY of the dispensation under which we are placed, as one argument of its diviner perfection.

Its MILDNESS is another:—it is not only *the voice*, but it is the STILL AND SMALL VOICE OF ¹² GOD.

Throughout the Jewish system we have noticed a predominating rigor:—its countenance was lofty and severe—to strict

¹² 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

obedience it promised life;—but on the violation of duty it pronounced death:—it spoke blessings—but its curses were loud and deep;—it was governed by a righteous spirit;—but it wielded in its formidable hand a sceptre of iron, to shape the ruggedness of man to the designs of his good providence. God was thus pleased to employ the powerful instrument of terror, and accomplished *the law, as the school-master* ¹³ *who was to bring us to Christ*;—but from the mount which burned with ¹⁴ *fire*;—and from blackness, and darkness, and tempest,—we are come unto Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.

The angelic hymn of praise, on the birth of the Messiah, was happily adapted to the religion that event was to introduce;—a religion which, by a worship

¹³ Gal. iii. 24.

¹⁴ Heb. xii. 18, &c.

more suitable to an immaterial and holy Being, was to *give glory to* ¹⁵ *God*; and, by the benignity of its temper, to inculcate *peace and good will towards men*.

Through the whole of its silent flow, the life of Jesus gave force and explanation to his precepts—while his precepts reflected lustre on his life.

If we examine his *conduct*, we behold a continued exercise of patient virtue, and of active charity. We see HIM *who was sent to bind* ¹⁶ *up the broken-hearted, going about* ¹⁷ *doing good*;—exerting his power for the relief of natural and moral evil;—*when reviled* ¹⁸ — *reviling not again*; washing with unaffected humility the feet of his disciples:—weeping over the approaching punishment of his murderers, and breathing out his innocent soul in prayer for their transgression.

¹⁵ Luke ii. 14.

¹⁷ Acts x. 38.

¹⁶ Isai. lxi. 1.

¹⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

If we listen to his *discourses*, we hear HIM, who was *anointed* ¹⁹ to *preach good tidings*, inviting those who are heavy ²⁰ laden to come to him and receive rest. We hear him declaring that he judged no man; that he came to save ²¹ that which was lost;—to preserve life ²² and not to destroy it. We hear him blessing the meek, the poor in spirit, the peace-makers,—the mourners,—the persecuted.—We hear him exhorting his disciples to learn of him, for he was ²³ lowly of heart:—not to ²⁴ judge, that they might not be judged:—to be merciful as their Father was ²⁵ merciful—that they might obtain mercy:—to humble themselves ²⁶ as little children, that they might be great in the kingdom of Heaven:—to prove themselves HIS disciples, by extending their love beyond their brethren, to their enemies—by requiting cursing with blessing, hatred with good will, per-

¹⁹ Isai. lxi. 1.

²¹ Matt. xviii. 11.

²³ Matt. xi. 29.

²⁵ Luke vi. 36. Matt. v. 7.

²⁰ Matt. xi. 28.

²² Luke ix. 56.

²⁴ Matt. vii. 1.

²⁶ Matt. xviii. 4.

secution

secution and despiteful usage with prayer and intercession to Heaven. If we ever hear him *threaten* or *reproach*, it is the careless, the wanton, the worldly-minded, the rich; or the proud, the hard-hearted, the hypocritical, who are the objects of his salutary threatenings, or of his generous reproaches.

The impression of mildness, thus stamped on Christianity by the divine excellence of its author, was rather strengthened than impaired by those holy men who were appointed by the Spirit of God for its propagation.

In every page of the apostolic writings, we are instructed *to walk*²⁷ *in love*, and fulfil its law;—*to follow after*²⁸ *charity*; *to rejoice with*²⁹ *them who rejoice*, and *to weep with them who weep*:—*to use hospitality*³⁰ *one to another*;—*to bear one another's burdens*; ³¹ *to be pitiful*, and *put*³² *on*

²⁷ Ephes. v. 2. James ii. 8.

²⁸ 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

²⁹ Rom. xii. 15.

³⁰ 1 Pet. iv. 9.

³¹ Gal. vi. 2.

³² Col. iii. 12.

bowels of mercies : to remember them who are in bonds, as ³³ bound with them ;—and them who suffer adversity, as being ourselves also in the body :—to let our moderation be ³⁴ known unto all men, and to judge nothing ³⁵ before the time that the Lord come, to restore them who are overtaken in a fault, in ³⁶ the spirit of meekness, lest we also be tempted ;—and not to count ³⁷ them as enemies, but to admonish them as brethren :—in every thing to conform ourselves to the beneficence of our God, who hath promised us, when we turn to him,—remission of our sins ; who hath given us the adoption ³⁸ of sons ; and who, for the spirit of fear, by which he formerly governed us, hath graciously substituted the spirit of love.

Here, then, is a strong discrimination between the law and the gospel, and a proof of that riper excellence which

³³ Heb. xiii. 3.

³⁴ Phil. iv. 5.

³⁵ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

³⁶ Gal. vi. 1.

³⁷ 2 Thess. iii. 15.

³⁸ Gal. iv. 5.

marks the consummating dispensation. The law was bondage, whose necessary harshness controuled the rebellion of man; but the gospel is, the glorious liberty of the children of God: while that may be regarded as the clouded majesty of the ascending, this will appear to be the pure sunshine of the direct, and meridian DIVINITY.

But, to this eminent distinction of our holy faith, objections of an opposite character have been advanced; by *some* the gospel has been represented as unstringing the manliness (*b*) of the mind; as incapacitating for active duty, and by its enfeebling influence tending immediately to the overthrow of society: by *others* it has been charged with concealing under superficial mildness, an unrelenting and savage spirit;

(*b*) Nat. Hist. of Religion, and in many of Mr. Hume's other tracts. That pure Christianity was incompatible with a state of human society—was a paradox maintained by the celebrated M. Bayle.

U

with

with having peace in its mouth, but the fury of discord in its heart.

By one class of objectors we are sent to the cloister, to behold the abasement and narrowness of trembling superstition; or to the desert, to view the self-inflicted pains of wild and solitary fanaticism;—in these places, as we are assured, dwell the *virtues proper to Christianity*;—abstinence, penance, self-denial, communion with God, maintained by seclusion from man, and desertion of this world, with all its duties for the acquisition of the next: to this cast of *virtues* another of a different description, connected with the business of life, and rich with the sterling of utility, is ostentatiously contrasted; and while the superior character of efficient justice, active benevolence, elevated courage, disinterested patriotism, is unnecessarily displayed, we see the heroes (c) of Pagan story arrayed against the saints of Christi-

(c) Nat. Hist. of Religion.

an legend; and observe, without much surprise, the victory given to the *former*.

By another set of opponents we are directed, with malicious triumph, to the persecutions and wars which the breath of religious zeal has every where kindled; from the first civil establishment of the Christian faith, we are dragged through the wide regions of history, to follow the desolating progress of this pretended enemy to man; we are shewn the fury of her first domestic contests,—the convulsions with which her *papal* ambition harrassed Europe;—the extention of her ravages to the heart of Asia.

We are, then, led to the cells of the Inquisition—to see her seated, with interest, pride, and ignorance, as her assessors on that bloody tribunal;—unwounded with the piercings of humanity;—glutting her ear with the groans of torment;—and condemning—with a mockery of legal process—the conscientious, the liberal, and

the enlightened!—from this horrid scene we are again hurried to behold her on a larger theatre! to see her not satiated with the devastation of one continent, crossing the Atlantic, with avarice by her side, in quest of another hemisphere to blast!—to see her marching with the CROSS and the SWORD;—propagating her doctrines, and her slaughters;—unpeopling cities, provinces, and empires;—and, with eyes of flame, exulting over the prodigious ruin!

To *each* of these severe accusations, we will in order reply.

On the minutest examination of the Gospel, we can discover nothing in its *precepts* which *ought* to lower the tone of the mind, and unfit it for its part in the social harmony;—on the contrary, in this holy system, we find moral obligation placed on its true base—THE WILL OF GOD, and armed with its proper sanctions—the APPROBATION OR THE DISPLEASURE OF THE ALMIGHTY every where inculcated; and

and, in all its relations of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, magistrate and subject, defined with accuracy, and enforced with power.

If we enquire particularly into the virtues recommended by the divine law, we are satisfied that they bear a direct reference to the advantage of society: *the love of God* is to be manifested by *the love of our neighbour*; and *charity*, in its extended sense, embracing every branch of benevolence and beneficence, is declared to be *the end of the commandment*.

Even those evangelical virtues, which are more closely connected with the individual, we see looking full on the public good; for we know that charity, temperance, self-command, humility and forbearance, tend as evidently by their operation to *promote*, as the opposite vices do by their influence to *interrupt* the welfare and the peace of the community: of Pagan ethics we see nothing excluded from the

Christian code, but the fierce and the disorderly;—what encroaches on the equality of man, or on the prerogative of God; we behold pride and revenge degraded by the Gospel into vices;—and we hear the divine command forbidding the licentious disposal of our existence; but we are sensible that an indulgence of passion can never be *real strength*, and that a flight from the less evil can never be *genuine heroism*.

In the discourses of our divine Master, we sometimes indeed find expressions, which, in their most limited sense, would lead to consequences injurious to action; but we reflect on the particular situation of his hearers:—we recollect that he spoke to ears inured to the boldness of figurative diction:—we have recourse to the illustrations of his disciples;—and we sometimes discover his meaning by a comment of his own.

If

If strongly to contradict some favourite infirmities of the human heart, we hear him bidding his followers to *take* ³⁹ *no thought for the morrow*, and to him who has *smitten* ⁴⁰ *on one cheek, to turn to him the other*,—we hear him at another time enjoining them *to be wise* ⁴¹ *as serpents, though harmless as doves*; to make to themselves friends *of* ⁴² *the mammon of unrighteousness*;—to *provide* ⁴³ *both scrip and purse*;—and even to sell a garment *for the purchase of a sword*. We are then sensible of the liberal interpretation with which the former precepts are to be extended to Christian practice; and we perceive that their sole object is to correct the excesses of worldly solicitude, and of disorderly passion.

Concluding, therefore, on the whole, that the Gospel doctrine, which builds morality on the perfections of God, and reconciles the value of life with the con-

³⁹ Matt. vi. 34.

⁴⁰ Luke vi. 29.

⁴¹ Matt. x. 16.

⁴² Luke xvi. 9.

⁴³ Luke xxii. 36.

tempt of death, must directly tend to give elevation to our aims—energy to our exertions—propriety, as well as direction and scope to our virtues. We proceed to enquire, whether the Gospel *spirit*, in its action on the human conduct, can be brought to contradict this conclusion, and support the charge of our adversaries.

In this enquiry, we must necessarily repair to those early periods, when *this spirit* wholly predominated; and men, not inheriting a prosperous, but adopting a persecuted faith, allowed not the soil of passion to corrupt its integrity.

Directed, then, by this investigation, we shall find youthful and pure christianity, warm, social, energetic, mixing in all the occupations of life:—exemplary alike in the higher or the lower, the public or the private station:—happy in the one, but not shrinking from the other. Brave without brutality in the camp; polished, yet ingenuous in the court; and,
by

by the splendour of its virtues, extorting the reluctant admiration of its enemies.

If we are directed to survey it in a later age, we can distinguish nothing but its form and its name. Amid the jostlings of human depravity, its genuine spirit is extinct—and that its very form and its name are able to exist, can be attributed only to the *immediate pleasure* of its ALMIGHTY PARENT.

These, however, have survived; and, by the Divine Grace, have been reanimated with a portion of their former soul. Remote from *evangelical* perfection, as may be the practice of *modern-christianity*, when compared with paganism, it will shine with considerable lustre. Its attendant virtues are not only of a softer, and a more engaging complexion, but their character is *more useful*, and, with *less fierceness*, is equally strong. There is not only a greater purity of morals in the Christian than in the Heathen world;—
but

but there is likewise a more general diffusion, and a more uniform exertion of justice, benevolence, valour, preference of duty to life.

Whether we regard the influence of this holy system on societies or individuals, we shall be satisfied of its tendency to advance the perfection of our nature. Among the followers of Christ, we may reckon in every age the *greatest*, as well as the *best* men. With the mock virtues of the monk, or the hermit, christianity has no intercourse; and for the support of these children of ignorance and weakness, we might with equal propriety consult the *Koran* as the *Gospel*.

If we must therefore bring Christian saints into competition with Pagan heroes; let us throw aside the Roman calendar, and open the apostolical history. Let us observe the protomartyr STEPHEN, as he pleads with divine indignation the cause of truth, against the prejudices and interest

rest of his judges!—Let us remark him, amid the agonies of a severe death—collected—composed—with a charity yet more divine than his late indignation, praying for the shedders of his blood;—and commending his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Master!—Let us attend the APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES through the long series of his labours!—Let us follow the rapidity of his benevolence from Asia to Europe, and from Europe to Asia—as careless of ease or of fortune—of pain or of death—*of evil report⁴⁴ or of good report*—he pursues the great object of his ministry!—Let us see him, when able to command the liberality of his followers, subsisting by the labour of his hands—but soliciting, for the wants of others, that assistance which for his own he refused!—Let us behold him elevated above the tumult of passion, yet accessible to its finer, and more generous emotions!—*weak with the⁴⁵ weak!—burning with*

44 2 Cor. vi. 8.

45 2 Cor. xi. 29.

the offended;—glorying in his ⁴⁶ infirmities!—straining after perfection!—forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those ⁴⁷ things which are before!—pressing towards the mark for the prize of his high calling!—and exulting at the near prospect of dissolution, which, on earth, was to be the sole recompence of his toils!

With these characters, and many more which might be produced as the *offspring* of the *gospel*—we may challenge the pride of Pagan antiquity to compare. Instruct us, ye defamers of Christian virtue!—in what age of heroism, or in what school of philosophy are we to look for such true magnanimity,—such unwearied compliance with duty,—such pure and *God-like* beneficence,—such exalted contempt of worldly good and evil,—such triumph over those weaknesses, which cling the most closely to the heart?—If you cannot

⁴⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 5.

⁴⁷ Phil. iii. 13.

in this instance direct our search to be successful—be just enough to acknowledge, that the influence of the Gospel, though *mild*, is neither enfeebling nor unsocial; and that, while it consults the happiness of *another life*, it is powerfully conducive to the real, and nobler interests of *this*.

We are now to answer the accusation—that brands the *gospel of peace* with *cruelty*—and objects to it crimes the most opposite to its nature.

That war and persecution have unhappily followed the success of christianity, and thrown a gloom over the lustre of her triumph, is a fact which we admit and bewail; and, in prospect of this sad result of the excellence of his religion, and the infirmity of man, our blessed Lord declared, that *he came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword*.

Poly-

Polytheism, proposing little to the fear, and nothing to the hope; and directing worship to creatures, whom she was unable to raise above contempt, could not engage a sufficient interest in the heart to awaken its emotions. But the awfulness of Gospel-truth would admit of no neutrality. The impression which she made was deep—her efficacy roused—enraptured—alarmed!—the good were enamoured of her charms, the wicked shrunk from her terrors, and the *weak* would frequently dread the menace which she suspended only over the head of guilt. In these circumstances, superstition would make her comment on revelation, and, with a solicitude extending to the eternal welfare of others, would endeavour at any risque to propagate those modes of acceptance with God, which her disturbed fancy represented as alone likely to be effectual.

It is thus probable, that, blind to the most obvious letter of the Gospel, ZEAL was the earliest persecutor: but, from the
hand

hand of weakness and ignorance, the sword was soon wrested by a legion of evil passions, and all the friends of human depravity ventured to insult our holy faith, by arranging themselves under her banners.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, a monstrous apostacy, foretold in terms of great clearness by the apostles, began to discover its deformity:—and making superstition the instrument of its temporal greatness, polluted with its various corruption the current of Christianity—causing it at one time to run muddy with avarice—at another, black and turbulent with ambition.

But the *well-head* of the Gospel was incapable of stain, and it seems in our days to be providentially vindicating its stream from the foreign and accidental impurity.

The age of Christian liberality and toleration is apparently at hand; and the present history of a large portion of Europe

rope may be brought to refute those enormous misrepresentations of malice;—that persecution is inseparable from the mild religion of Jesus;—that the WORD OF ⁴⁸ GOD *must always be cloathed in a vesture dipped in blood, and from his mouth necessarily issues a sharp and destroying sword.*

The last argument for the pre-eminence of the Gospel we derive from its HOLINESS—it is the voice which speaks the DIVINE PRESENCE OF GOD:—and here the parallel between the introductory and the closing dispensation, being more perfect, will the more clearly evince the superiority of the latter; and the gracious accommodation of the Supreme to the moral and intellectual progression of man.

To promote holiness was evidently the leading purpose of the Jewish separation:—while this great object entirely occu-

⁴⁸ Rev. xix. 13.

pied the moral law—under the thin veil
 of external purification it powerfully pre-
 vailed in the ceremonial, *the* ⁴⁹ *circumci-*
tion of the heart; *the sacrifices* ⁵⁰ *of a bro-*
ken and contrite spirit; *the incense* ⁵¹ *of*
 fervent prayer; *the washing* ⁵² *in innocency,*
and the making clean ⁵³ *from evil,* are the
 instructions which the inspired comment
 of the prophets teaches us to collect from
 the ritual of Moses: every part, therefore,
 of the sacred institution, spoke distinctly
 and aloud, *sanctify yourselves, for the Lord*
who hath chosen you to be his own nation,
is holy.

But holiness, under the law, slooped
 with its requisitions to the imperfect ma-
 turity of human nature;—it made some
 concessions to passion, and some to appetite:
 —If in many instances it forbade private
 enmity and revenge;—in many, it per-

⁴⁹ Deut. x. 16. Jer. iv. 4. ⁵⁰ Psalm li. 17.

⁵¹ Psalm cxli. 2.

⁵² Psalm xxvi. 6, 7, 13.

⁵³ Isai. i. 16.

mitted (*d*) their indulgence;—fornication it prohibited;—and against adultery, incest, extravagant and abominable lewdness, it levelled its severest decrees:—but in the admission of polygamy, divorce, and concubinage, it acquiesced;—it respected, in short, the hardness of the heart, and was satisfied with preparing it by slow and gradual impression for a state of greater purity.

If we now contemplate the holiness of the Gospel, we shall discern it to be of a higher strain—of a chaster and more heavenly character; it yields nothing either to the depravity or to the weakness of the heart; in sleepless vigilance it guards that fountain of action, and forbids even the

(*d*) See Numb. xxxv. 19 and 27 verses. The law of retaliation seems to have been a condescension to the weakness of passion; as such it was considered by our blessed Saviour, Matt. v. 38, 39. and in many instances it might be contrary to substantial justice, and to the great end of justice—the public good.

distant

distant foot of disorder.—The wickedness of the thought, and the adultery of the eye, are as offensive to this searching principle, as those grosser acts which alone were cognizable *by the law*; it not only binds in ten-fold chains, *the hands* of wrath and malice, but, adversariously to their very existence, it threatens *with judgment, him who is even* ⁵⁴ *angry without a cause*;—and classes *with murderers* ⁵⁵ *the hater of his brother*.

Restoring the first simplicity of the institution to marriage, it admits of no deviation into the paths of sense. Polygamy it prohibits, and concubinage it regards as fornication—it indulges divorce only for that crime, which alone can subvert the purposes of the sacred writ; and by teaching us to consider our bodies as the *shrines of the* ⁵⁶ *HOLY GHOST*, it deepens

⁵⁴ Mat. v. 22.

⁵⁵ 1 John iii. 15.

⁵⁶ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

every crime of impurity with the blacker dyes of sacrilegious violation.

While it places before us the faultless example of our LORD JESUS CHRIST—the author ⁵⁷ and finisher of our faith, it calls upon us to follow ⁵⁸ him, to grow in his ⁵⁹ knowledge,—nay, to put ⁶⁰ him on; and to be perfect as he is perfect.—To imprint with more force on our minds, the intimate relation which we bear to our heavenly Master, we are represented as the ⁶¹ members of his body; and as parts of one holy temple, of which he is the chief corner ⁶² stone; and which is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, for the immediate habitation of God! Can we venture then to profane the body of Christ, and thus crucify him afresh? or shall we dare to pollute the temple of the LIVING GOD; and with the outrage of our passion, affront the sanctity of his order?

⁵⁷ Heb. xii. 2.

⁵⁹ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

⁶¹ Ephes. v. 30.

⁵⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

⁶⁰ Rom. xiii. 14.

⁶² Ephes. ii. 20.

But

But, to follow all the precepts of Gospel purity, and to remark all the motives which enforce them, would be to copy the entire volume of the new covenant.—By every Christian, and by every *Infidel*, who turns over the sacred page, it must be acknowledged to be the unalloyed—undrossy gold of HOLINESS,—worthy of the BEING who gave it, and consistent with the highest perfection of the *creature* to whom it was given.

In this last character, therefore, of diviner excellence, the Christian dispensation may, with propriety, be affirmed to resemble *the still, small voice* of GOD.

But, it has been asserted, or *insinuated* (e) rather than asserted, that this holiness, like the mildness of which we lately boasted, is the pride of *Christian pretension*—not the principle of *Christian conduct*;—and that the influence of our reli-

(e) Nat. Hist. of Rel.

gion on morality is even *positively bad*, has been contended with arguments drawn from the history of the dark and middle ages,—the enormities of priestly power and voluptuousness—and the joint reign, in many parts of Europe, of superstition and flagitiousness.

If the remark be restricted to the effects of that imperfect christianity, which, for so long a period, *has usurped* the throne of Gospel-doctrine, we will not object to its truth—it is in some degree established by history, and its causes lie exposed to common observation. A superstition, which secretes the written revelation of God, and, with the attribute of infallibility, gives to *man* the power of varying at his pleasure the moral limits; a superstition, which can permit *one party* to absolve crimes, and can induce *the other* to respect the absolution;—a superstition, whose foremost virtues are celibacy, fasting, mortification and seclusion—must be the legitimate and prolific parent of vari-

ous

ous depravity. Where pardon can be obtained on easier terms than a change of life, the *ignorant* will not refrain from gratification—and, by the insulting grossness of such a superstition, the *enlightened* will too frequently be driven into infidelity, where passion may luxuriate without controul.

Thus far, then, we submit to the justness of the remark; but, if its *insinuation* be extended to the effects of *genuine christianity*, we must strongly and directly contradict it,

While with shame we confess, that in no country, and in no age, since the *civil* prevalence of the gospel, has the general practice of Christians corresponded fully with the purity of their faith—with honest pride we assert, that wherever the Gospel has been preached, its improving efficacy has always been felt; and wherever its *spirit* has prevailed, there likewise have

prevailed a greater chastity of manners, and a more pervading sanctity of life.

If that religion, indeed, who carries ETERNITY in her hands, be permitted to speak—She must necessarily command attention when she declares that *no adulterer, ⁶³ nor unclean person, nor covetous man, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God;—and that the abominable and murderers, and whore-mongers ⁶⁴ and all liars, excluded from the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire,*

But, O gracious GOD! how long wilt thou suffer thy *glorious gospel* to be thus falsely traduced? how long wilt thou permit its insulting enemies to ask us, “Where is *now* your God? Of old, ye say, that He was manifested; and that nature, with her suspended laws, bore testimony to his presence.—Where is he

⁶³ Ephes. v. 5,

⁶⁴ Rev. xxi. 8.

“ now?

"now?—*Shew us the* ⁶⁵*Father, and it*
 "will suffice.—But away with these fables
 "which could amuse only the childhood
 "of man! With the subjects of reason,
 "the base coinage of superstition can ne-
 "ver be current.—Or were it, indeed, as
 "ye fondly believe, Wherefore is the
 "heavenly communication withdrawn?
 "Is it not because your religion is dis-
 "pleasing to the Supreme?—Can you
 "dream that the HOLY ONE would main-
 "tain commerce with a faith, which has
 "weakened and exasperated the human
 "character; which has not, as you idly
 "pretend, ripened and corrected like the
 "Sun, but, like a comet, from its eccen-
 "tric orb, has spread desolation and
 "alarm?"

Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be
scattered! ⁶⁶—or rather, O Father, em-
 brace them with thy mercy! enlarge their
 bosoms with thy grace!—with thy spirit

⁶⁵ John. xiv. 8.

⁶⁶ Psalm lxxviii. 1.

enlighten their eyes ! disclose to them the golden chain which encircles the VARIOUS UNITY of thy Providence ! and let them behold thy IMMATERIAL GLORY resting full upon thy church !

When man, for his transgression, was driven from Eden, thou tookest (f) a scion from the *tree of life*, and engrafting it on a barren stock, Thou did'st watch over it with thy presence, and with thy dews from Heaven Thou did'st refresh it !—it flourished, —and bore for thee *precious*, but not abundant fruit. Amid the dreadful vengeance which thy justice required, this plant was thy peculiar care. In the wreck of the world, Thou did'st preserve it—and after some removals, Thou did'st place it in thy prepared and cultivated garden of Canaan. *There* the beams of thy GLORY cherished it, and *there* the *flaming sword of thy* ⁶⁷ *cherubim turned on every side* in its defence—but, at the time

(f) Psalm lxxx,

⁶⁷ Gen. iii. 24.

appoint.

appointed by thy wisdom, its angelic guard retired; and its growth, disdaining limit, spread widely over the earth! on its head, which mingled with Heaven, brooded the HOLY DOVE; and, from its MYSTIC BRANCH (g), *thy still small voice called the nations from* ⁶⁸ *the rising to the going down of the Sun.* Under its shade walked holiness and charity; and its blossoms and its fruits wafted to thy nostrils the perfume of celestial incense! wherefore now, O Lord, are its boughs broken, and its honours defaced? Wherefore, now, beneath its shade, do *satyrs dance,* ⁶⁹ *and wild beasts of the desert repose?* Hast THOU *forgotten* ⁷⁰ *to be gracious?* — or, is thine arm shortened, that it cannot protect?—Thine arm, Lord! is not shortened—nor hast thou forgotten to be gracious. Justly as Thou art offended with our sins, Thou wilt at length look down—and from the habitation of

(g) Zech. iii. 8.

⁶⁸ Psalm l. 1. ⁶⁹ Isai. xlii. 22. ⁷⁰ Psalm, lxxvii. 9.

thy

thy glory *Thou wilt behold and visit this plant*—the creature of Thy providential hand! Thy heavenly vigour will again work at its root; once more wilt thou teach its branches to extend; again wilt thou redeem its polluted shades, and make them again to resound with melody and thanksgiving!

In thine own time, O mighty Lord! thou wilt provide, that *the man of the earth be no more exalted against thee—or against THINE ANOINTED!*—if in a little *wrath thou hast⁷¹ hidden thy face for a moment from thy church—yet the covenant of thy peace shall not be removed, and with everlasting kindness thou wilt have mercy upon her. Her foundations thou wilt yet lay with sapphires; and make her windows of agates, and her gates of carbuncle—her doors shall be open day and night—the fullness of the Gentiles shall overflow thy courts;—and the various tongues of the*

⁷¹ Ifai. xlv. 8.

world shall form one harmonious chorus to thy praise ! Then too *shall the captive daughter of Sion shake herself ⁷² from the dust and arise*. She shall see her great Prophet's face *without ⁷³ the veil*. She shall fall down in adoration before *him whom ⁷⁴ she pierced*. She shall hear thy comfortable voice telling her that *her warfare ⁷⁵ is accomplished* : that her *iniquity is pardoned* ; that she shall no more wring out the dregs ⁷⁶ of the cup of trembling : for her God reigneth ! *she ⁷⁷ waited for him, and, to make her joyful ⁷⁸ in his house of prayer is he come—to say to the prisoner ⁷⁹ go forth, and to her who was in darkness, shew thyself ; for sorrow and mourning shall flee before thee ; and a royal diadem ⁸⁰ shalt thou yet be in the hand of the Lord !*

⁷² Ifai. lii. 2.

⁷³ 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14.

⁷⁴ Zech. xii. 10.

⁷⁵ Ifai. xl. 2.

⁷⁶ Ifai. li. 17, 22.

⁷⁷ Ifai. xxv. 9.

⁷⁸ Ifai. lvi. 7.

⁷⁹ Ifai. xlix. 9.

⁸⁰ Ifai. lxii. 3.

Yes !

Yes!—O GOD OF SALVATION!—from the eminence of faith I behold the amazing scene!—I see the *curtains of thy*⁸¹ *tent stretching over the earth!*—I see *thy glory breaking forth on the right and on the left!* I see Jerusalem, the holy city, no longer desolate, but *dressed*⁸² *in her beautiful garments*, hastening to meet her REDEEMER, who cometh to make her *desart*⁸³ *like the garden of God!* Yes, I behold thy hand, O Lord! *exalting the*⁸⁴ *valley*, and bringing *low the mountain;*—*making 'the crooked straight, and the rough plain.*—By *thy still small voice* the human tempest is assuaged! from the grasp of murder is snatched the *consecrated steel*; interest and passion have ceased to riot in the blood of man:—and THY SPIRIT, as in the beginning, broods on the face of the world!

These, my beloved Christians, are the prospects of our faith! and our faith is established on the promises of that RIGH-

⁸¹ Isai. liv. 2.

⁸² Isai. lii. 1.

⁸³ Isai. li. 3.

⁸⁴ Isai. xl. 4.

TEOUS BEING, whose word is more steadfast than the frame of the Heavens and the earth!

But let him hasten his ⁸⁵ work, that we may see it! and let the counsel of the HOLY ONE draw nigh and come, that we may know it!

Let us then, Christians, be proud to forward, by our conduct, the purposes of his gracious providence! let us walk steadily in faith and in love; let us manifest the influence of our religion—and persuade by the eloquence of example!—let us be just, beneficent, charitable, raised above the fear of man,—in prosperity not exalted, in adversity not depressed;—in temperance—in ⁸⁶ patience possessing our souls;—and blessing the hand which gave and the hand which hath taken away!—then will our adversaries be ashamed to blaspheme;—they will examine the rea-

⁸⁵ Isai. v. 19.

⁸⁶ Luke xxi. 19.

sons of that faith, whose efficiency they behold so brightly displayed—they will examine!—they will *turn to the Lord their God*,—and he will ⁸⁷ abundantly pardon!

But if, dead to the noble pride of thus working together with Providence for the happiness of man, we are ourselves unmindful of *the great* ⁸⁸ *salvation* which is offered to us—*how shall we escape?*—Shall we not be confederate against the LIVING GOD? Will not the *still, small voice*, which now breathes for our persuasion and comfort, be changed into a voice of terror, for our reproof and condemnation? Will it not upbraid us as the persecutors of the Lord! as men who have exposed his sufferings to the derision of infidelity,—as Christians who have closed the door of his church against the Pagan, the Mahometan, and the Jew!

⁸⁷ Isai. lv. 7.

⁸⁸ Heb. ii. 3.

O save

O save us, Father, from this species of blood-guiltiness!—if our disorders are too deeply fixed for THY SPIRIT to remove, O grant at least, that their influence may be confined to ourselves, that we alone may absolve the penalty; and that our contagion may neither poison the health, nor inflame the diseases of our fellow-creatures!

To come into thy presence, O thou HOLY ONE! with all our naked imperfections, must to the best of us be awful and alarming; but to stand at thy tribunal—not only sullied with frailty, or spotted with impurity, but blackened with atrocious MURDER,—must be too horrible for man to sustain! *Fall on us ye mountains, and ye rocks hide us from the wrath of ⁸⁹ the Lamb!*—But, may thy mercy, O Father, raise us to better hopes! may thy grace excite, encourage and prosper our endeavours to walk in thy laws; may

⁸⁹ Rev. vi. 16.

our lives propagate thy righteousness, and hasten thy kingdom ! and when the sweetness of thy *still small voice* has won the whole ear of man ; and infidelity, conscious of **THY PRESENCE**, has veiled its blushing face, may we rejoice among thy saints, and for our reward experience that blessedness which we have contributed to diffuse !

Oh ! make us thus the instruments of **THY GOODNESS** and of **OUR OWN HAPPINESS**, and then, come Lord Jesus ! Amen.

S E R.

S E R M O N X.

On the TEMPORAL ADVANTAGES
of a RELIGIOUS LIFE.

PROV. III. 17.

HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS,
AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE.

OF all the passages in the Sacred Writings, which have supplied topics to the preacher, not one perhaps has more frequently been brought forward, than that which I have now read. But its subject, far from being exhausted, will yet compensate the time we may give to the discussion of it. They, who reflect that the precepts of religion are few and simple

—its advantages many—but obvious, will not exact with too much rigor from the pulpit, the doubtful recommendation of novelty.—By a happier attitude more fully to display, or with a larger body of light more strongly to illustrate, is all the merit to which the Christian advocate of these days can with propriety aspire. What is *new* he has reason to suspect: and he must always remember that his great object is *truth*;—and his higher province to cultivate the rectitude of the heart,—and not to flatter the vanity of the head.

If we consider religion as the proclaimer of the kingdom of God;—disclosing to those “*who lay in darkness and the shadow of death*” a world of light, and of glory, which neither sin, nor pain, nor mortality can approach, we shall be unable to estimate the greatness of her worth. However severe her requisitions, and hard the terms on which her promises were to be fulfilled,—did she exact from us a life of suffering upon earth, and demand that we should

should embitter our four-score years with austerities, the most hateful to our nature, —reason surely, looking to the infinite recompence, would not hesitate to embrace her rigor, and to pay the trivial price of EVERLASTING HAPPINESS.

But, if we regard religion as our friend in this world, as well as our guide to Heaven; as proposing for acceptance with God, those conditions which are essential to the welfare of man, as condescending to make the only road which can lead us to the limited enjoyment of this state, conduct us to the glorious expectations of another, —our love will be commanded by the combination of her excellence;—we cannot delay to take this bright dispenser of blessings to our arms;—we must instantly fall down in humble thankfulness to the FATHER OF MERCIES *for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

That many, ignorant of the true character of religion, fly from her as unamiable,

able, and harsh, the experience of every hour too certainly demonstrates. The young dread the opposer of their irregular gratifications;—the old—the reprover of their bad habits; their attachments to the world;—their ill-governed and ill-directed passions,

Come, then, my gay, or my prudent friends—let us examine the wisdom and the consistency of your conduct!—your object is happiness, that common object of man, to which the activity of the profligate and the virtuous; of the selfish and the benevolent; of the worldly and the devout—is equally directed.—The haven which we are all desirous of attaining, is the same;—the courses only by which we steer for it are different—if happiness therefore, even *temporal* happiness, can be found in the track of ambition, or avarice, or pleasure;—if religion can be proved *maliciously* to turn us from gratification; and as we sail on the ocean of life, *wantonly* to expose us to its greatest roughness,—
the

the propriety of your election shall be admitted—however easily, even under these circumstances, it might be contested with effect. The world must then be acknowledged to possess very powerful attraction; and its *Children* may be regarded as *wiser in their generation than the children of light*.—The claims of religion to preference will certainly be more questionable; and as she solicits us with diminished charms, the good will be less struck when they see her, like her HEAVENLY PARENT, *despised^a and rejected of men*.

But, on the contrary, should the ways of that DIVINE WISDOM, described by Solomon, compared with the ways which you frequent, and her paths, with the paths in which you tread, be discovered in truth to be *ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace*;—should her discipline be found admirably adjusted to the necessities of our imperfect state;—and without respect to her glo-

^a Luke xvi. 8.^a Isa. liii. 3.

rious reversion, should even her present affluence be demonstrated greater than that of any of the family of Sin ;—should these be the consequences of this important enquiry,—you must surely allow that there will be no competition to distress your infirmity, and distract your choice ; as it would be madness to refuse an immediate benefit, because the acceptance of it is hereafter to be the object of reward, you must necessarily for the same great end, adopt with us, the same righteous means.

For a proper view of the subject, thus designed for this discourse, we must entertain a just conception of the *nature* and the *situation* of man.

Of this nature, we know that God, having formed him from *the dust of the ground*, *breathed* ³ *into his nostrils the breath of life* ; and thus, with a body compounded from

³ Gen. ii. 7.

the earth, *he became a living soul.* Between those very different substances, (matter and spirit) the union in man is most perfect, while the soul is the sentient, and the intelligent principle;—the body supplies her with the organs by which she receives all her sensation, and with the inlets through which all her original ideas are admitted. The strictness of this wonderful union is discoverable by other effects, if the body is weakened by the struggles, and corroded with the anguish of the soul;—the soul, exposed to all the bad consequences of the unequal alliance, suffers severely from the disorder which shakes the frailty of her companion.

The *situation* of man agrees with his nature. By his intellectual powers he asserts his relation to the world of mind and spirit; and seems, in the creation, to be placed a little lower only ⁴ than the angels; but his material part connects him with a

⁴ Psalms viii. 5.

world

world of inferior order ; a world, which, abounding with evils, manifestly appears to be the place of preparation for riper and ascending existence; in this theatre of exercise and combat, on whatever side he turns, a hideous group of calamities rises to his view ; from many of them his prudence may withdraw him ; with many he must inevitably engage ; and while in some instances, his own abilities and exertions may suffice to obtain the victory, in others—neither his power, nor his wisdom, nor his virtues can avail, to give him protection. As an individual—a member of society—an inhabitant of earth, he is subject to the violence of the elements, and the bad influence of climates ;—to fraud and to oppression—to want and to affliction—to diseases and to death,

With this nature then, and in this situation, from whence can man derive the strongest promise of successful toil ? From what line of conduct can he justly hope for a larger portion of the good, and a smaller

smaller of the evil, which are scattered around him, apparently with so capricious a hand? Shall he attend to that wisdom which directs him to power, and to riches, as to the rational objects of his pursuit?—which assures him, that to be great and distinguished,—to enjoy the means of oppressing his enemies, and of raising his friends, is the pride of human happiness:—or which instructs him, if his mind be too weak or too timid for the rough contest of power, to seek for solace and aggrandizement in the arms of wealth;—a possession, which, without a great spirit, elevated talents, or superior knowledge, may be obtained by the more common endowments of prudence and cunning; of a steady temper, and an unimpassioned heart: to whatever part of this counsel he may incline, he will wander from his proper course, and expose to certain wreck his comfort and his peace.

The enormities, and the sufferings of ambition, which croud the splendid volume

lame of the historian, can extend their warning only to a few; but the mischiefs of the same passion, remarked, as they poison the current of common life by the moralist, or the preacher, bring home to a thousand bosoms their salutary disgust. Let us, therefore, lend our attention to the man who follows happiness by the path of power—and balancing his gains with his losses, his enjoyments with his distresses, let us impartially decide on the merit of his adventure.

The progress of his first endeavours to break through the obstructing multitude is slow, and effected with much difficulty; with pre-eminence in view, *he must rise early, and late take rest;—he must eat the bread of carefulness, and labour:—*in vain does the taste of pleasure solicit his palate, he must shun it as destruction; from the innocent indulgencies of social life he must abstain—even the necessary recreations of

* Psalm cxxvii. 3.

human nature he must frequently forego ; and he soon feels, that the tyrant whom he serves, is not less rigid in his exactions, than the severest superstition.

To some, indeed, favoured with very illustrious abilities ; to some, aided by the accidents of high blood and commanding connexions ; to some, in short, conducted by a hand not to be distinguished by human reason, the steep of power has been more easily accessible ; but, in general, it is to be overcome only by the strong exertions of persevering toil.

When the adventurer has proceeded a little on his way, fresh difficulties occur ; has he any liberal or ingenuous feelings ? let him reflect that their importunity will harass, if it cannot disconcert him ; let him consider, that obedient to the dictates of his interest, he must win his superiors by servility, while insolence to his inferiors must supply the wretched compensation : that if they can assist his rise, he must

must embrace those whom he hates ; if they are in his path, he must remove those whom he loves ; that if his mind be comprehensive, he must narrow its extent to the littleness of faction ; that at one time he must stand forth as the tribune of the people ; at another, he must stoop to be the sycophant of the throne ; that supplanted, he must supplant, and betrayed, he must betray. Has he then any liberal or ingenuous feelings ? attentive to his situation, let him rescue himself from these determined enemies to his repose ;—and then—after a solicitous and guilty period of artifice and of falsehood, of meanness and of pride ;—this moment fevered with expectation, and the next chilled by despair ;—at length he may obtain the reward of his perseverance.

And what is it ?—when the transient charms of novelty are decayed, he sees the giant of pursuit dwindle into the pigmy of possession ; and finds the vexation
of

of his labours derided by the vanity of his acquisition.

The powers of his constitution have been exhausted in the chace, and attacked by infirmities ; he beholds the hour of mortality approach, *when all his⁶ thoughts must necessarily perish* ; his eyes, no longer abused by the forcery of the world, are open to all its delusions, he looks back—and deplores his wasted time, his dishonest industry, his misapplied talents ;—he looks forward, and trembles at a region of unexplored darkness, which blackens on his view ; the adulation of the expecting croud hath ceased to be music to his ear ; satiated with its baseness, he loaths and rejects it with disgust.

In these melancholy circumstances, wounded by the past, and not gratified by the present, shall he, by applying his heart to that *righteousness, which delivereth*

⁶ Psalm cxlvi. 4.

⁷ Prov. x. 2.

from

from death, endeavour, though late, to conciliate the hostility of the future ! alas ! were he now even willing to adopt *that good^s part*, how shall he be able to extirpate passions, which for years have been striking root into his soul ! how disengage himself from the robe, which is incorporated with his very nature, and whose venom has penetrated to his vitals ! can he hope for the extraordinary assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT ?—he may, indeed, obtain it,—for who can assume to limit the mercies of the Supreme ?—but in this case it appears to be as easy to create as to reform ; and we are warranted by facts, to conclude, that this dupe of worldly greatness—this toiling pursuer of a phantom, elusive of his grasp—dies as he has lived—a stranger to his God.

He dies !—and leaves his rivals—the possession of his honours—to his followers—the disappointment of their hopes—

^s Luke x. 42.

to the reflecting—the instruction of his errors;—whilst a few, possibly, of the many who are indebted to him for their fortunes, swell with ostentatious gratitude, the pagentry which attends him to the grave.

These are the blessings claimed by the successful candidate for power!—by him, whom strong abilities, and unremitting labour,—a sacrifice of principles and feelings! and above all—a certain happy coincidence of events have united to push forward to the goal!—the features of the portrait may indeed be strong; but a little observation on what passes in the world will convince us, that the resemblance is just.

When fortunate ambition is thus un-
lovely, by what strokes shall we represent
her deformity, when she brings with her
no other attendants than mortified pride,
and blasted hopes!—when the best con-
certed schemes of the aspirer are over-

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thrown,

thrown, sometimes by the prevalence of his enemies, and sometimes by the perfidy of his friends. When his career is arrested by illness, or invisibly checked, by what seems to be the perverseness of his fate; but is, in truth, the will of THAT POWER, who gives not always *the race to the swift,* ⁹ *nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise.* Surely then, may we pronounce that POWER, as it is usually fought, and usually possessed, can pretend to no alliance with happiness;—and that the painfulness of every step by which ambition advances to her object, sufficiently discovers that GOD, *who giveth grace to the* ¹⁰ *humble, resisteth the proud.*

But, WEALTH may be attained with more ease. Are its advantages more numerous and certain? It is, indeed, one of the talents confided to our stewardship; and, in some instances, it may prove one of the most precious favours extended to

⁹ Ecclef. ix. 11.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. v. 5.

man. When dropt on the same soil with that love, ¹¹ *which is the fulfilling of the law*, it is fruitful of a thousand blessings; and issues forth like *the river which went out of Eden to water the Garden* ¹² of God. In the hands of the just, the temperate, the beneficent, and the righteous, it is the nerve of social industry, the test of self-command, the encourager of retreating merit, the bread of silent and helpless want, the heavenly visitor of sickness and affliction, the benefactor in short of OUR SAVIOUR CHRIST, and the creator of a little paradise; at whose bidding a desert and churlish world *blossoms* ¹³ *like the rose, and breaks out into singing.*

But, if wealth be thus sometimes given by the *Father of* ¹⁴ *Mercies*;—it more frequently seems to come from THAT GOD, to whom *vengeance* ¹⁵ *belongeth*. When to obtain it is the aim of the master passion,

¹¹ Rom. xiii. 10.

¹² Gen. ii. 10.

¹³ Isai. xxxv. 1.

¹⁴ 2 Cor. i. 3.

¹⁵ Psalm xciv. 1.

—the abuse almost invariably follows the acquisition; and it is either permitted to sleep in unprofitable rest;—or dissipated in vicious gratification.

The character of the wretch, who lives for no other purpose than to accumulate riches, has frequently been described;—his cold and contracted bosom;—his few and sordid enjoyments; his many and miserable, and vain anxieties, have always been the common-places of moral remark. *There is a sore evil, says Solomon, which I ¹⁶ have seen under the Sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But these riches perish by evil travel: and he begetteth a son; and there is nothing in his hand. As he cometh forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came; and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. In all points as he came, so shall he go; and what profit hath*

¹⁶ Eccles. v. 13, &c. &c.

he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath in his sickness.

From the familiar description of the avaricious, let us pass to the view of another character, known likewise to all ages; but, from the peculiar circumstance of a rich and remote territory, subject to merchant-domination, displayed more at large in this country, and in our time—the character I mean, of the **RAPACIOUS** and **PRODIGAL**;—of him, who, rising from beggary, not with the slow foot of parsimony or commerce; not with the quickened pace of usury or private wrong, but hurried on the wing of kingly ravage, to almost kingly superfluity, lavishes in despicable ostentation the riches of exhausted provinces.

Are you then sore pressed by the evils of poverty, and madly solicitous for wealth?—Behold the man, in whom

unite the opposite enormities of CON-
QUEROR and PECULATOR—in whom the
BOLDNESS OF MURDER embraces the
COWARDICE OF THEFT!—from realms,
blasted by his oppression, and unpeopled
by his massacres, see him returning to the
sovereign whom he has betrayed, and the
nation which he has disgraced!—follow
him to his palace, and there see him, a-
mid the glare of opulence, seated with the
sharers of his luxury; whose eyes scowl
contempt, while their tongues vibrate
with praise!—attend him to the solitude
of his chamber; and as he lies on the tor-
ture of the mind, explore the eager and
strong beatings of his heart!—Issue with
him from his uneasy home, as he wanders
into public, to ask for his reward from
the gaze of the multitude; and see where
the basest, not weak enough to be daz-
zled with the splendour of successful vil-
lainy, turn from him with anger and de-
testation!—Observe all the sad and morti-
fying variety of the scene! Let it take
possession of your breast! and then say,
are

are you so in love with riches as to envy their unhappy master? Will you barter conditions with this gaudy wretch? With your *treasure* will you purchase his *baubles*? With the health of your innocence, the surfeit, and the fever of his guilt?—Alas! the hand of power, gained by his pernicious gold, may snatch him from human laws! His country, and his species, may vainly solicit for justice! but, *the voice* ¹⁷ *of the blood of thousands, crying from the ground, will enter into the ears* ¹⁸ *of the LORD OF SABAOth.*—Shame, ¹⁹ *and not promotion, shall pursue the man of violence and fraud!* In his own bosom shall he bear the condemnation of his crimes! *He may call the* ²⁰ *lands by his own name; and fancy that his dwelling-place shall endure from one generation to another. But as he came in with iniquity he shall depart* ²¹ *in darkness; and his name shall be covered with darkness.*

¹⁷ Gen. iv. 10.

¹⁹ Prov. iii. 35.

²¹ Ecces. vi. 4.

¹⁸ James v. 4.

²⁰ Psalm xlix. 11.

Wealth, therefore, as a leading object of life, must be regarded as nearer to a curse than to a blessing. It may seem, indeed, like power, to be a mere instrument, which must borrow its whole direction and character from the hand which governs it. But, like power, it is generally neither so neutral, nor so passive; it may enlarge the action of virtue, and make her more obvious to the admiration of men: but it cannot add to her stature, nor heighten her genuine beauty. To vice, on the contrary, it not only gives efficacy and scope, but is frequently her parent, and always her cherisher. While in many cases it proves the source of discontent, and the destroyer of peace, in no case can it exempt from the pains of the body, or the pangs of the mind; in no case can it relieve the satiety of the present, or appease the apprehension of the future,

To be placed, then, above the temptations

tations of *severe* ²² *want*, but below the corruption of dangerous abundance, will be the earnest petition of every wise man; for he must be sensible, that WEALTH and POWER *alike make them crooked paths, and are strangers* ²³ *to the way of peace.*

But there is another idol of human worship, whose votaries are more numerous than those of greatness, or of riches;—listen to PLEASURE!—there is persuasion—but it is fraudulent persuasion—upon her lips!

Remember, O man, the condition of your birth!—in a short time, the little play of your heart will cease—and then all that awakens the tumult of your activity—your pains, and your joys—your fears, and your hopes, will sleep in forgetfulness and silence:—Yes—your life will soon be past—but much (a) sooner all

²² Prov. xxx. 8.

²³ Isai. lix. 8.

(a) Optima quæque dies miseris mortalibus ævi
Prima fugit: subeunt morbi tristisque senectus,
Et labor, &c.

VIRGIL.

that

that is desirous of your life—your youth and your health:—should no accident hurry on your doom, long before your blood forgets wholly to flow, it will be thickened by age, and polluted with disease; instead of the brisk spirit which now revels in your veins, will prevail a cold and melancholy (*b*) damp;—one by one your amusements—your friends—your senses will abandon you;—to your ears the voice of melody will speak in vain; on your eyes will fade the beauties of the creation; to your palate the richest *blood of the*²⁴ *grape* will be insipid, till at length, survivor of your comfort and yourself, you will encounter darkness with satisfaction, and run to the sad, but hospitable and necessary welcome of the grave.—This is the condition of your birth!—why will you, then, refuse to avail yourself of the little which can be enjoyed? Bank-

(*b*) A melancholy damp of cold and dry—

MILTON.

²⁴ Deut. xxxii. 14.

rupt of life, why will you be prodigal of time? Why submit to days of toil, and nights of watchfulness, for mockeries and shadows? for power, that bubble of pride? for wealth, that cheat of folly? Can *this* bribe, the possession of a day? or *that* by recalling nature to her fountain, give enjoyment to feebleness, and ravish from the sepulchre its victim?—Is not this to *spend money for that* ²⁵ *which is not bread; and labour for that which satisfieth not?* Alas! the gold for which you waste your ease, will but inflame the vices of your heir; and the cold ear of death, that insulter of human greatness, will not be delighted with the honours of a name!—be wise then while you may; seize the hour, whose pinions are even now ready for irrevocable flight, and allow it to appetite and indulgence. Into the short but precious interval between the restraints of childhood, and the infirmities of age, crowd all the delight that interval can

²⁵ Ifai. lv. 2.

embrace;

embrace; let love supply its rapture, and wine its sparkling exhilaration; as afflictions will come too soon, let them not by anticipation rob you of your joys; nor suffer the possible darkness of to-morrow to overcast the brilliancy of to-day; but always be mindful, that what is enjoyed is your own, and that the blessings of yesterday are placed beyond the malice of your fate: *Come on then, let us enjoy²⁶ the good things that are present! let us speedily use the creatures, like as in youth! let us fill ourselves with costly wines, and let no flower of the spring pass by us; let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered: let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness; let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion, and our lot is this.*

Such have always been the arguments of pleasure; and too happily adapted as they are, to the frailty of the heart, they

²⁶ Wisdom ii. 8.

have been set off with the heightenings of poetry, and recommended to us by the gay colouring of wit; but if we attend to reason, we shall fully discover their fallacy, and find them to be ill-accommodated to a creature like man; of *few²⁷ days and full of trouble.*

If we cannot, by forbearing to reflect on the evils of our situation, prevent their audacious intrusion, is it not more prudent, by the preparation of a wise discipline, to meet and break their assault, than to permit them to surprize us without arms; and, sleeping, or revelling at a distance from our post? The libertine's inattention to *the morrow*, frequently creates those evils with which the morrow is loaded, and at all times adds to the oppression of their weight, the shock and smartness of a stroke; neither is the voluptuary's cultivation of the *present day* much more answerable to his views, for some of its

²⁷ Job xiv. 1.

hours will necessarily belong to langour, and some to disgust.

In this world, PLEASURE and HAPPINESS are evidently distinct, and the high tones of the *former* will not melt into concord with the sweet, slow, grave modulation of the *latter*: the lesson of temperance is forcibly inculcated by our nature, prescribing to the appetites their limits of indulgence; to their transgression she annexes immediate punishment, and bidding surfeit invariably follow excess, and depression every riot of the spirits, she intimates with sufficient clearness, that we are not born to solicit our principal gratification from the sense.

To be more affected with this truth, let us contemplate the man, who expatiating over the wide field of pleasureable license, despises the narrow sobriety of life; who calling moderation weakness, and prudence fear, applauds himself on his triumph over those prejudices, as he is pleased

ed to call them, under which we tamely stoop.

But in what stage of his luxurious progress are we *indeed* to envy him the pre-eminence of his delights?—of him it may properly be said, that *in the fullness of his sufficiency*²⁸ *he is in straits*. In the high tide of youth and of health, his satisfaction is never genuine and unmingled,—even at this sanguine period, he must experience some anguish, and much satiety : and in the very fountain of enjoyment, something of bitter will bubble up, and dash it with distastefulness—either he has violated the peace of families:—or, (if the distresses of others cannot touch him,) he has embarrassed his circumstances:—or he has endangered his person:—or he has sullied his reputation. Has he fortunately escaped these causes of uneasiness?—others press on him which he cannot evade.

²⁸ Job xx. 22.

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When the surrounding activity of life seizes on his attention, he sees the thousand hands of society in motion; each by contributing to the *general*, advancing a right to its *particular* advantage.—His natural equals have left him behind—his inferiors are by his side, and pushing beyond him.—While useless and stationary he meets with neglect from the worldly:—with pity and desertion from the good. In the pursuits of *others* exercise is rewarded with strength; and success usually with respect—in *his* the first is debility, and the last contempt.—To *others* succeeding years, if they yield not all that may be fondly expected from them, still bring with their hours something that is valuable.—To the *busy* more experienced wisdom.—To the *studious* larger information.—To the *virtuous* easier self-command, and brighter hopes.—To the *voluptuary* alone they offer no compensation for their decay. To *him* they supply nothing new: they open no fresh sources of ideas:—they give no better prospects to hope,—but, converting
appetite

appetite into fever, they associate inflammation with weakness.—And if they bring amendment nearer to his wish, they remove it further from his power. As over a blunter palate they pour the same luscious cup, they repeat the same sad tale of life wasted; improvement lost;—degradation incurred;—friends abandoned.

And are you not ashamed of this poverty of object;—this neglect of duty;—this inutility in the world,—this incapacity of higher attainments?—do you not feel the wretchedness of an enfeebled constitution;—of a dissipated attention;—of a debased and resourceless mind;—of an unsatisfied, if not an upbraiding conscience?—Yes, your *determined* gaiety—and your incessant chase of amusement; the fatigue and sickliness of your countenance defeat the proud silence of your tongue; and declare that, standing on the base of wealth, neither assailed by any strong afflictions, nor advanced far into decline, you are unhappy! how will you then

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bear

bear the days of darkness²⁹ which shall be many; and to which your present days will be like the sun³⁰ when he shineth in his strength! with what forces will you cope with the pain and dejection of illness, the cold discomfort of age, and the last searching severity of death!—Haste, then, summon to your aid all your remaining powers—break this instant from the fascination of miserable pleasure!—fly, even now, (it will yet be effectual,) to ABSTINENCE for gratification;—to REASON for resource;—to RELIGION for pleasantness and peace!—redeem yourself from the reproach of neglected reformation—nor suffer this divine truth to preach from your tomb:—*O man, whoever thou art that walkest in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, know, that for all these³¹ things God will bring thee into judgment.*

The pretensions of the three great competitors of religion have now been exa-

²⁹ Eccle. xi. 8. ³⁰ Rev. i. 16. ³¹ Eccle. xi. 9.

mined—and what is the result?—That they are vain and lying—and calculated to seduce the weakness of man, from that happiness to which they assume to be his guides;—to extend the examination to all the varieties of erroneous choice would be tedious and unnecessary, they all spring from the predominating influence of pride or avarice, or sensuality; and the individual branches must derive their qualities and description from the parent root: this only it may be proper to observe, and the uniform experience of mankind authorises the observation—that on every departure from the rectitude of reason attends its proportion even of temporal affliction; and that, by the ETERNAL APPOINTMENT OF GOD, *the ways of unrighteousness never can be ways of pleasantness, nor its paths peace.*

But can religion afford us more than we are to expect from the impotence of the world,—from its greatness, riches, pleasures!—in the inquiry, which must form

the reply to this question, we will first consider her comparative excellence, and just shewing her in contrast, afterwards exhibit her by herself.

Of religion, then, as she stands opposed to her rivals, the most obvious and discriminating advantages are her impartiality and easiness of access;—the comfort and certainty which attend her in possession—the beneficial consequences of the pursuit which she directs—and the supreme beauty and importance of the objects to which she looks.

For the acquisition of power or wealth are demanded peculiar talents;—severe labour, rigorous self-denial,—for the participation of pleasure,—youth, spirits, constitution, and affluence;—but to enjoy all the benefits of religion, sincerity and meekness only are requisite; the multitude rejected by her competitors, she invites to her hospitable board, the simple and the wise—the warm-hearted and the cautious,
—the

—the old and the young, the afflicted and the gay, the poor and the rich, are welcome alike to her maternal arms;—they share her common blessing, and she leads them all into the presence of their equal God, *the Lord* ³² *and Maker of them all.*

Power and wealth are found as deceitful and uneasy when possessed, as, when pursued, they seemed distant and hard to be overtaken;—no sooner are they embraced than ugliness appears;—solitude succeeds;—and their weak and poor masters feel nothing but the dread of losing the worthless earnings of their lives;—with pleasure it is still worse, if pleasure can ever with propriety be said to be attained,—its attainment is loathing—remorse or disease;—but religion, won as soon as sought, is possessed with increasing delight; what appeared to be harshness, is discovered to be beauty; in her train follow *that love* ³³ *which*

³² Prov. xxii. 2.

³³ 1 John iv. 18.

casteth out fear, and her certain dower is assurance³⁴ and peace, for her treasures cannot be ravished from us by accident or violence—and withdrawn by her sweet compulsion from every ruder competition, we rest safe, and distant from the storm of life.

When power or wealth is the chace, the fatigues and dangers of the pursuit are commonly injurious to the health of the body, and always to the serenity of the mind; in the rough sport innocence is lost; and the unfriendly passions, seizing on the heart, spread their corrosive mischief through the frame of pleasure; it is superfluous to remark, that constitution, principle, character and understanding are the general victims of its extended ravage; but the pursuit, directed by religion, is usually the source of health to the body, and always of satisfaction, vigor, growth, and conscious progression to the mind; in

³⁴ Isai. xxxii, 17.

this life, indeed, it is destined, never to be fully successful; but its very solicitude is a kin to happiness; its defeat a species of triumph; and its generous disappointment only kindles expectation, and *hope which*³⁵ *in the event will not make ashamed.*

The objects of sensual indulgence are as transitory as they are sordid, enjoyed in common with all the animated creation; they perish as soon as tasted, and leave behind them an humiliating feeling of infirmity and want; the other objects of worldly activity are likewise very circumscribed in duration and in size; let us swell the bounds of our power or our riches, as widely as our hearts can wish, there will yet be something beyond us to laugh at the littleness of our possessions; or, were we neither to be overlooked by our superiors, nor justled by our equals, still would the occasion of our pride be very soon no more; naked as we came into

³⁵ Rom. v. 5.

life, naked must we depart ; and the suddenness of disorder, or the maturity of time, will place by the side of the beggar the monarch of the world. But the objects of religion are lovely as goodness, and dignified as holiness ; wide as infinity, they are permanent as eternity !—and within their circumference the moral and intellectual appetites of man, stinted by the narrowness of the universe, may luxuriate without apprehension of restraint ; the rapture of beneficence and gratitude, the charms of symmetry and order, everlasting happiness, and still ascending perfection, the glorious attributes of that IN-COMPREHENSIBLE BEING, who, filling all space, connects every link of the spiritual and the material chain—are the delightful and stupendous objects, which, crowding the eye of devotion, give rectitude to her aim, and invigoration to her nerves.

These are the most prominent advantages of religion, as she appears in contrast with the subjects of our preceding examination ;

nation ; let us now behold her unassisted by a foil !

Her ways are ways of pleasantness—impossible, exclaim the gay ! to follow her we must leave all we possess of pleasure, and to be at ease in our enjoyments, we must fly to that carelessness which withdraws us from her dominion, or to that philosophy which pulls her from her throne,

But what gratification, my friends, does she require you to abandon ? certainly not that sober gratification, of which alone your nature is capable ; the circle which she draws round the pride of passion, may to its rashness seem narrow ; but within the compass of that circle alone can passion walk with safety and with pleasure.

This boundary of indulgence has, indeed, been greatly straitened by prejudice and misrepresentation,

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It may truly be affirmed, that religion has suffered more from the blind zeal of her friends, than from the vain malice of her adversaries; for, protected from the *one*, by the armour of light in which she is arrayed;—by the *other* she has incurred the imputation of rigor, and become unamiable for severity not her own.

Scarcely had Christianity mounted the imperial throne, when, founded on a few passages of the Sacred Writings, either wholly misunderstood, or applicable only to the infancy of the church, or to the persons to whom they were immediately addressed,—the doctrines of mortification and extreme abstinence were unhappily introduced: suited to the darkness of those times, in which they first appeared, and, to the bigotry of the south, the scene of their earliest rise, the growth of these doctrines was vigorous, and their dissemination rapid and extensive. Monasteries were every where erected, and every where crowded; the desarts were peopled with her-

hermits ; and multitudes, on the merit of seclusion from their species, of painful penances and unnatural austerities, gained the mock honours of canonization, and arrogated the favour of their God!

But the extravagances of fanaticism and superstition are unacknowledged by the Gospel. And to *our FATHER* ³⁶ *who is love and who dwelleth* ³⁷ *in light*, the sullen homage of suffering and of fear can never be acceptable.

It will be found, that pure christianity not only bids us *to rejoice in our labour*, and *to serve the Lord with gladness*; but tends by its influence to inspire that joy and gladness which it recommends. Its precepts are accommodated to the welfare of communities,—families,—individuals. As the direction of those vices which it reprobates is to misery,—that of the virtues it inculcates is immediately to happi-

³⁶ 1 John iv. 8.

³⁷ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

ness;—justice, temperance, benevolence, forgiveness of injuries, the love of man, and of God, are its useful, and delightful lessons.—*For what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, to love ³⁸ mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*—Or in other words—to follow that conduct from which *private*, mingled with *social* good, must necessarily flow; and to maintain that communication with the *Creator*, which must always be prolific of the purest enjoyments of the *creature*.

Even when the countenance of religion is the most stern, and her voice the most strongly contradicts our inclinations,—her radiant finger is still pointed to happiness!—it is for our eventual profit that she punishes:—it is only the hand of suicide lifted against the bosom of our own peace which she arrests!

³⁸ Mic. vi. 8.

Does

Does she sometimes call us from the house of feasting to *that of* ³⁹ *mourning*—from the quick sparkle of gaiety, and the eager circulation of spirit, to the damp apartment of sickness or of Death—to the chilling silence, or to the wounding lamentation of the destitute, and the afflicted?—is she sometimes guilty of this violence to our feelings?—it is to make the heart better, wiser, happier!—to correct its deceitfulness—to humble its dangerous pride;—to chastise its false hopes;—to arm it with fortitude against the necessities of our birth;—to gratify it with fresh, and more elevating enjoyment; to swell it with the fine transport of benevolence, and to solicit the generous tear, which drawn by pain, issues in mysterious delight.

Does she earnestly *befeech us to* ⁴⁰ *abstain from fleshly lusts*, to check the importunity of appetite; and to resist even the prurency of the *thought*? it is because *we are*

³⁹ Eccle. vii. 2.

⁴⁰ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

strangers, and pilgrims, who travelling at a distance from our own country, are harassed with difficulties, and beset with dangers! it is because in this situation irregular pleasure wars against the soul. By weakening, and by alienating from its proper objects, that nobler part of man, it gives effect to the dangers which menace us; and by the depression of self-abasement, and the torment of self-reproach, it adds painfulness as well as number to the difficulties which fatigue us.

Is religion still censured as too rigidly opposed to gratification? she may, indeed, be allowed to prohibit those vagrant intercourses which are acknowledged by all to be as injurious to the individual as to the community. But does she not bind with too confining, and strict a hand, the circumscription of that state, *whose* ⁴¹ *bed she pronounces honourable and undefiled?* Under the dispensation of the law, and be-

⁴¹ Heb. xiii. 4.

fore its promulgation, man was indulged with polygamy and divorce; and patriarchs and prophets availed themselves of the indulgence. But the gospel, assuming the controul of a civil institution, restrains *one to one*, and orders that the contract shall be dissoluble only by infidelity or death.

To dwell on the *political* inexpediency of polygamy, to descant on its injustice to the poor; on its partial exaltation of *one sex*, and its cruel degradation of *the other*, would be foreign to the present purpose. Adapted as it may have been to some periods and conditions of society, it is now generally allowed to be unfriendly to population, as well as unjust, partial, cruel,—but rejected by the legislator and the philosopher, it will be found as little to correspond with the views and wishes of the *voluptuary*.

If our religion has repressed the licence of numerous wedlock,—for its ferment
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she has substituted peace,—for its imaginary enjoyments, temperate and real happiness. In those countries where polygamy still prevails, the Haram is commonly the distinction of rank, or the ostentation of wealth, rather than the accommodation of pleasureable luxury.—Could I convey you to that scene of eastern corruption, you would behold the insensible or the fatiated master;—either tyrant or slave, holding a fullen commerce with the creatures of his pride, or sunk in the most effeminate subjection to the ministers of his pleasure;—unacquainted with any union of interest—a stranger to the equality of friendship, and the interchange of mind. While you beheld ignorance and sloth hanging thick and heavy over the mansion,—within the chambers you would hear the many tongues of discord;—and would be witness to the little and vexatious intrigue of female competition. Here you would behold suspicion begetting acrimony and oppression—there, dependence and fear giving birth to all the low vices
of

of servitude; and every where, passion, without love, and the activity of the mind either quickened into contention, or slumbering in untasted sensuality;—instructed by what you saw, you would turn with disgust from this boy's paradise, and embracing, for the sweet comforts of domestic life, the *simplicity* of Christian marriage, you would court its *chastity*, for all the true voluptuousness which your constitution is fitted to enjoy.

But admitting the *restriction* of marriage to be proper, is its *indissolubleness* equally unexceptionable? May not many natural causes of dislike, unsuspected at the period of the contract, or many disagreements of temper, which lurked under the veil of artifice, till the engagement was ratified, defeat the whole purpose of the institution, and convert the intended fruitfulness and domestic blessing into sterility and mutual unhappiness?—Yes,—and in some cases it is possible that the separation which redressed the private grievance might

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not

not be adversarious to the public advantage; but such is the condition of human society, that every general regulation must be liable to partial inconvenience, and the good consequences which follow the permanency of the marriage contract, are infinitely more numerous than the bad; while the certainty of the connection effects a more perfect blending of interests, it induces, from the *prudence* of either party, those small compliances, which, accruing into bulk, and hardening into habit, constitute that great basis of social harmony,—similarity of temper. On the unqualified admission of divorce, if the public morals were not remarkably pure, innumerable evils would attend; marriage would be the mere servant of convenience, or the pandar of shameful dissoluteness—while it subsisted, it would be disgraced by a cold and jealous disunion of interest: and when by the breath of caprice it was dissolved,—the offspring of the casual alliance would be robbed of their birthright, in
the

the services and affections of one author of their being.

Many other reasons might be adduced, for the noxious tendency of licentious divorce. — But, enough has been advanced, to prove, that, in this article of its *permanency*, as well as in that of its *limitation*, the frame of marriage, as modelled by Christianity, is, *on the whole*, admirably adjusted to individual and social good.—We are certain indeed, that the complaints which we hear on this subject, are usually the complaints of profligacy;—and that few have ever been hurt by the weight and stricture of the matrimonial chain; who, when they assumed, it either kept its right object in view, or preserved their judgment free from the taint of corrupt passion, and the abuse of visionary fancy.

On a review of what has been said, it will appear, that either compared with the other subjects of human cultivation,

or, standing by herself, the lustre of religion is eminently superior and splendid—easy of ⁴² attainment;—in possession certain, and peaceful—leading through the region of mental and corporeal perfection to the most delightful and sublime prospects—attended by a train of beneficial and lovely virtues;—adverse to pleasure only when pleasure, from our nature and condition, must terminate in pain;—by the providence of severity discovering kindness and beneficence—she must be allowed to enjoy a greater capacity of conferring even temporal blessings, than the greatness, wealth, or pleasures of the world:—could she be degraded to *the creature of political institution*, still would *her ways and paths be pleasantness and peace*; and in her society would be found all the limited fruition which the œconomy of our present state will afford.

⁴² Deut. xxx. 14. Rom. x. 8. Wisd. vi. 12, 13, 14.

But

But if, as the child of human wisdom, our reason must admire and adopt her, how wonderfully does she rise in estimation, when she comes to us with all the credentials suited to her rank, authenticated the DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN—the ANGEL OF THE MOST HIGH—THE SOFT-TONGUED HERALD OF EVERLASTING JOY! It is needless to remark the greater influence on *present happiness*, which she derives from this exalted dignity of extraction and of office. Were she related only to *this state of things*, philosophy might be raised into her rival;—as she is connected *with another*, she laughs at the insulting competition: In the first case she would be the truest friend and best counsellor of life; in the last, she assumes her more awful and her diviner character, as the comforter of affliction, and the vanquisher of death!

To bring together the consequences of this discourse, and to make the effects of our holy faith in its production of tempo-

ral enjoyment more sensible and obvious, let us for a moment consider the CHRISTIAN; him I mean, who more than *believes*, who *feels* the truths of the Gospel living and energetic in his heart.

Acquainted with the great purpose of his present probationary being—in whatever rank of society he may be placed, he sees and acknowledges the goodness of the divine appointment, is he by his station compelled to labour for his scanty and precarious bread?—He knows, that if on some occasions, the conflict of trial may be sharp, the victory will be the more honourable, and the reward of conquest the more abundant. He beholds immediately over him the eye of his Heavenly Father, and near him there is a friend, from whose unfailing goodness and power he can at all times draw comfort and assistance; his bosom, opened by distress, hospitably receives the distresses of others; and softened into general kindness, he embraces pleasure in the very lap of pain: patience, submission, chearful compliance
with

with lowly duty, are the sacrifices in which his situation is rich;—these he cultivates; and collecting them into one fragrant offering, he presents them to his God,—and his God, pleased with the worship of obedience, descends *from the high and holy place, to dwell with the contrite* ⁴³ *and humble spirit of his servant!*—the world is then overcome; labour ceases to be painful—indigence acceptable to the Lord of the universe; and once chosen by the Redeemer of man, is honourable and pleasant;—and the disciple of Jesus, followed by the blessing which his Master pronounced on the meek, and the poor, walks easily through life, till, from his transient depression, he passes to that state, where *many who are first shall be* ⁴⁴ *last, and who are last shall be first.*

But, is the votary of religion invested with eminence and wealth—surrounded with the pride of life—and with all the

⁴³ Isai. lvii. 15.

⁴⁴ Matt. xix. 30.

luxury of indulgence in his grasp?—the subject of inconsiderate triumph is to him the source of prudent distrust, and of pious solicitude: he dreads the aggravated clamor of the passions;—and, aware of the importance and difficulty of his delegated station, he bends in earnest prayer to the Author of all Power!—his prayer is heard, and his weakness suppli-
ed with strength; passion after passion submits its violence to his controul—till independent, and monarch of himself, he sees the path of salvation widening to his eye, and strewed with flowers under his feet; is he engaged in the activity of public life? no perplexity of low and trivial politics, no peevishness of interested and guilty competition, can touch the elevation of his mind!—his object is extended good;—his reward, the approbation of his heart, and his Creator—disgusted with the meanness, or shocked by the rudeness of faction—does he fly to the dignity and silence of retirement?—still is he bound to society—perhaps as a husband and a father—certainly as a master, patron, and bene-

benefactor; no languor hangs upon his day, and no sameness fatigues it; each hour, with its compleated exercise of duty, refreshes him with novel pleasure—for the infinite variety of devotion and benevolence can never be exhausted; with the same hand which he now raises to the God of blessing, he now gives body to the large charity of his heart; and as he disseminates happiness he gathers transport; the beauty and order of his soul assume a kind of shape, if I may so speak, and come forward to the gaze of the beholder; they smooth and open his brow—their sweetness discourses from his eyes—over his whole countenance they spread an expression and lustre, which strike beyond the most faultless symmetry of features! — Is he doomed to feel the trouble to which his species are born?—He knows that affliction, in its longest period, must soon pass away; he sees in it the trial of his integrity, or the chastisement of a paternal hand, intended to bring him nearer to that perfection after which he
strains;

strains; he meets it therefore with acquiescence—with meek confidence, with gratitude—I had almost said, with delight!—As he sinks into decay, the moderation of his youth becomes the health and vigour of his age: run to its very dregs, his existence is not destitute of favour; and if he wishes for its conclusion, it is less from any sense of its bitterness or insipidity, than from the near prospect of more commanding attraction!—the Lord for whom he waited is at hand! *and his ⁴⁵ soul is a thirst for the living God.*—*The scene closes in softened melancholy, or rather in mitigated joyfulness.* At the bed of departure, dressed in more than their wonted charms, stand the virtues, whose fellowship he cultivated during life;—these quiet the last short risings of his breath; and putting their hands gently on his lids, resign his spirit to his REDEEMER, by whose intercession, washed from the stain

⁴⁵ Psalm xlii, 2.

of human frailty, it is admitted to the throne of THE SUPREME HOLINESS.

Such is the imperfect draught of a character, which, even in this age of trite libertinism, of selfish and vulgar sensuality, is not entirely unknown; attached to that mediocrity of life, which is removed from those severer trials that shake the *extremes*, it is yet frequently found associated with the *highest* and the *lowest* condition; and this *Christian character*, my Brethren, I would press upon your imitation, by the strong argument of present delight.

When *in Christ's* ⁴⁶ *stead I pray you to be reconciled to God*, I do not urge the cause of barren duty;—I do not advise you to overlook the recompence of reward; I do not point to remote blessings for your compensation;—I do not ask you to relinquish this world for another, which your weak fight cannot command, and

⁴⁶ 2 Cor. v. 20,

on which it cannot steadily repose!—no
 —be reconciled, I most earnestly conjure
 you, *to God*, and — take your reward!
 —as far as your present state will admit
 —be *immediately happy*!—use, and im-
 prove the world which you inhabit!—
 make poverty respectable and easy! teach
 wealth to be more fruitful of enjoyment!
 give comfort to affliction, stability to
 health, patience to sickness; to pleasure,
 relish, consequence, and novelty!

There was a period, when our holy
 faith bade its followers *to take up the cross*;
 and at that period, there were multitudes,
 whom neither *tribulation*, ⁴⁷ *nor distress*,
nor persecution, *nor famine*, *nor nakedness*,
nor peril, *nor sword*, *could separate from*
 THE LOVE OF CHRIST: that rich cordial
 for every pain, that *magic*, which could
 change the serpent of worldly evil into
 the rod of the *divine salvation*! with hea-
 ven in his bosom, man was safe from the

⁴⁷ Rom. viii. 35.

enmity of hell!—And *now*, my Brethren, when *obvious good* has succeeded to the *menace of infliction*,—what can with-hold you from THIS EFFICIENT LOVE OF YOUR REDEEMER? Does the eloquence of some vice plead against it in your heart? to welcome it must you tear yourselves from the arms of some darling habit, which is become almost *as your own soul*?—the effort must be strong;—but hesitate not to make it *pluck out* ⁴⁸ *this evil eye! cut off this offending hand!*—and for the painful exploit you will be largely compensated, by the treasures of a regulated temper, composed wishes, submissive passions, the sweet congratulation of conscience, and a *hope full of immortality!* and are not these sufficient for your happiness?—Does your predominant passion ask for its particular indulgence?—it shall not be refused—for to limit its excess, and to govern its aim, are the whole of *religion's moderate requisitions*; go, the

⁴⁸ Matt. v. 29, 30.

bids you, and, with the nerves of *active virtue*, climb to honourable *distinction*! —go, and by honest *industry*, *solicit* the competence of easy life, or the superfluity of extended beneficence! go, and when your mind retires from its accomplished duty, restore it with quiet recreation! *eat your* ⁴⁹ *bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry spirit*! in the circle of virtuous society partake of the feast of reason; and *shew that gladness is* ⁵⁰ *for the upright in heart*! Are you impatient of this bounded gratification? It is all, my sons, that I can now grant! but in those realms to which I lead, your nobler passions shall not complain of my frugal *limitation*; for the *artificial rank*, the vain and uncertain wealth, the shadowy and sickly pleasures for which they toil upon earth, in *my superior world*, they shall be gratified with a perpetual ascent of being; with those true riches which can never fail; with that joy, and those pleasures,

⁴⁹ Eccle. ix. 7.⁵⁰ Psalm xcvi. 11.

which

which stand for ever in the presence, and at the right hand of God!

We hear!—*Thou breath'st of the Almighty's power, and pure influence of his glory!* we hear thee, and will obey! *whither thou leadest we will follow!* and acknowledging the pleasantness of thy ways, we will tread firmly in thy paths, which, from all the peace of this life will conduct us to that *peace which passeth understanding, and terminate in the full blessedness of Heaven.*

51 Wisd. vii. 25.

SER-

S E R M O N XI.

On the BIRTH, DIGNITY and CHARACTER of the MESSIAH.

ISAIAH IX. 6.

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN,—UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN,—AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER, AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

AMONG the prophecies of the Old Testament, which announce the Gospel dispensation, those of Isaiah are distinguished by a clearness, accuracy, and extent, which have justly acquired
for

for him the title of EVANGELICAL. The incarnation, and ministry; the sufferings and triumph of the SON OF GOD;—with the whole scheme of his spiritual kingdom, from the adoption of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, to the period of its final and universal prevalence—were indulged to the vision of this illustrious prophet.

But on the page of prophecy some darkness will necessarily rest. And, from the character of eastern eloquence, prone to violent transitions, and fond of daring images, this darkness has contracted a deeper shade. If to these causes of obscurity be added the narrowness and poverty of the sacred language itself, in which one word is frequently susceptible of various meanings, we shall not be surprized to find some of the plainest predictions of Jesus wrested from their direct aim, and pointed towards other objects.—From hence has arisen the notion of prophecies which embracing two events, have admitted of two

accomplishments—a notion which is destitute of proof;—and which, admissible with certain qualifications, is capable of being extended to pernicious consequences.

From the fate of many other very distinct predictions, that which you have just heard has happily been exempted. The terms in which it is expressed, and the attributes which it assigns to its wonderful subject, are so lofty and magnificent as to make it applicable solely to the Messiah. If any other appropriation of it has ever been attempted, its sanctity has been found superior to the violation; and the attempt to overturn the united decisions of the Evangelists, the ancient Jews, and the whole body of Christians, has ended in the confusion it merited.

From the place which this prediction occupies in the prophetic volume, it appears evidently to be connected with the sign granted to the house of David: and the child now presented to us in such a blaze

blaze of character, to be the mysterious IMMANUEL, who was lately more imperfectly foretold. From the seventh chapter the prophet, while he mingles promises and threatnings to his country, seems likewise to blend the present and the future,—the temporal and the spiritual. No sooner has he supplied remote and dark consolation to the distressed family of David, than to Ahaz, the resigning individual of that family, he administers comfort, of a species better adapted to that prince's temper and wants, by announcing the immediate ruin of his formidable enemies. On this subject the prophet is principally engaged—till, from the eighth verse of the eighth chapter, he hurries frequently into allusions to the Messiahs and his kingdom. In the beginning of the following chapter, *these* manifestly take full possession of his mind—after calling our attention by a strain of high poetry to the advantages which were to follow the success of christianity; and just hinting at the dreadful overthrow which awaited the adversaries of

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God,

God,—he gives the adequate cause of these great effects, in the birth and consequence of the person described in the striking sublimity of the text—*for unto us a child is born!—unto us a son is given! and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and he shall be called wonderful Counsellor! the mighty God! the everlasting Father!—the Prince of Peace.*

Having considered the context of this remarkable prediction, let us proceed to its particular examination.

It opens with great spirit and rapture.—The long interval between the times of Isaiah and Christ is wholly lost,—to the glorious anticipation of prophecy, the distant event is present; and THE VIRGIN'S OFFSPRING IS ALREADY BORN!—THE PECULIAR SON OF MAN, AND OF GOD, IS ALREADY GIVEN!

He

He is born,—and as in all things he¹ is to be made like unto HIS BRETHREN,—as he is to feel all the infirmities of humanity which have no alliance with sin;—as here, after he is to be a man² of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—he now submits to the pains and weakneses of our commencing life—he becomes an infant—subject to parental authority;—and graciously drawing a veil over the fulness of the godhead, grows, like the imperfect nature which he adopts, in wisdom³ as well as in stature.

He is given by the mercy of the ETERNAL FATHER; who, as the supreme magistrate, could either refuse or accept the satisfaction offered for the violation of his laws;—and by HIMSELF, who, being in the form⁴ of God, and the express image of his person, voluntarily descends to the likeness of man, and, as our⁵ ransom, becomes obedient unto death.

¹ Heb. ii. 17.² Isai. liii. 3.³ Luke ii. 52.⁴ Phil. ii. 6.⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 6.

Let us regard for a moment some of the circumstances which distinguished this eventful *birth*;—the communication of this inestimable *gift*.

From the earliest times,—the promise given at the fall, and in clearer terms renewed to Abraham and his immediate descendants, seems to have excited throughout the east some faint and obscure expectation of a great Deliverer who was to appear upon earth. With the Jews, in consequence of a series of predictions disclosing the nature, office, and power of this extraordinary person, and determining with singular precision the period of his coming, this expectation was more ardent, and directed with better information.

When the *law-giver* ⁶ *had just departed from Judah*;—and the *seventy* ⁷ *weeks drew near to their accomplishment*—under the reign of Augustus, the whole nation of the

⁶ Gen, xlix, 10.

⁷ Dan, ix, 24.

Jews looked for the instant appearance of their heavenly king. But from the glowing language of the prophets, inflamed by the glories of Christ's spiritual dominion, this infatuated people, consistently with the usual grossness of their character, derived the assurance of temporal sovereignty and conquest.—*The prince Messiah, who was to sit on the throne of his father David*, was, as they fondly imagined, to rescue his subjects from their *human* adversaries; and, aided by the manifested arm of the Almighty, was to make Judea the pride and mistress of the world.

How ill-suited to this dream of earthly grandeur was the birth of our humble Jesus—it is almost unnecessary to remark. Born in the stable of an inn—of parentage whose royal blood was lost in the meanness of their condition—the son of Mary came to vilify the pageantry of greatness, and to scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

But the coming of the Messiahs, though unattended with circumstances calculated to flatter the prejudices of his countrymen, was accompanied by honours of a higher nature, and such as were more expressive of the kingdom which he was to establish. To the LOWLY, the PIOUS, and the SIMPLE, the immediate messengers of God carried *the good tidings of great joy*.—To ascertain to the homage of WISDOM, and SCIENCE, its proper and illustrious object, a new star was kindled in the east—to welcome the INCARNATE DIVINITY, the lips of ⁸ PROPHECY which had so long been closed were again opened;—and, in acknowledgement of the goodness of the giver, and the greatness of the gift—the *multitude* ⁹ of the heavenly host proclaimed GLORY TO GOD, PEACE AND GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN!

And never, since the divine Grace first communicated with our world, were these

⁸ Luke i. 68. ii. 29.

⁹ Luke ii. 13.

celestial Heralds engaged in an office, so honourable, and so important!—for he whom they proclaim is the SON ¹⁰ OF THE HIGHEST—THE HEIR ¹¹ OF ALL things,—*and the government shall be upon his shoulder!*

In almost all the prophecies which refer to the Messiah, we find him represented as a king. Unto ¹² *Shiloh was to be* THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE. It was a SCEPTRE ¹³ *which was to rise out of Israel*—the KING who was to be seated ¹⁴ on the holy hill of Sion—was to rule in the midst of ¹⁵ his enemies;—and the ¹⁶ government was to be committed to his hand.

From these, and many other passages in the writings of the prophets, which clearly announce the future royalty of the Messiah, the Jews were led, as we have already

¹⁰ Luke i. 32.

¹¹ Heb. i. 2.

¹² Gen. xlix. 10.

¹³ Numb. xxiv. 17.

¹⁴ Psalm ii. 6, 8.

¹⁵ Psalm cx: 2.

¹⁶ Isai. xxii. 21.

noticed,

noticed, to the expectation of a temporal monarch. Nothing, however, but the strong abuse of their carnal prejudices, could in this instance have closed their eyes against the rays of truth. For some of the attributes of this king and his kingdom were of a nature wholly inapplicable to any *temporal* potentate or empire—although the *one* should extend from the rising to the setting of the sun;—and before the *other*, *all kings should*¹⁷ *fall down, all people and nations should offer homage.*—If the¹⁸ *David* of prophetic language was to reign over the posterity of Abraham, he was to be their prince *for ever*; if *dominion and*¹⁹ *a kingdom were to be given to THE SON OF MAN*—it was a kingdom *which should not be destroyed, and dominion which should not pass away*: now, if *glory and extent* in almost any degree may be challenged by human greatness—its most arrogant pretensions can never reach to *eternal duration*.

¹⁷ Psalm lxxii. 11.

¹⁸ Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25.

¹⁹ Dan. vii. 14.

The prepossession, however, of the Jews, in favour of a worldly and conquering Messiah, was too deeply rooted ever to be extirpated;—it extended to the immediate disciples of Jesus—and it was not till their minds were illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and they had heard their Master, after his resurrection, declaring, that *all power was* ²⁰ *given to him*,—that these elected founders of the Christian church could entertain a just conception of that kingdom, the magnificence of which had fatigued the strength and boldness of prophesy, dressed in the richest colours of oriental diction; thus instructed, indeed, they at last beheld their Lord *ordained to be judge of the living and the dead; sitting at the right* ²¹ *hand of the throne of God, head over* ²² *all things*, and exalted, in the nature which he had assumed, *far above all principality and power, with angels and authorities* ²³ *made subject unto him*.

²⁰ Matt. xxviii. 18.

²¹ Acts x. 42.

²² Heb. xii. 2.

²³ Ephes. i. 22.

²⁴ 1 Pet. iii. 22.

But

But, this heavenly supremacy was not the only government which was to devolve on the Messiah:—he was to be invested likewise with *all power upon earth*; *kings were* ²⁵ *to come to the brightness of his rising*; *every knee* ²⁶ *was to bow at his name, and every tongue to confess him Lord.*

In this view of it also, the kingdom of Jesus was distinctly seen by every eye, but that of Jewish prepossession, from a source apparently the most scanty and inconsiderable, the stream of the Gospel, in opposition to the strongest efforts of human power, soon spread over the greater part of the habitable world;—though it may have since shrunk a little from its ancient bounds—this spiritual dominion of Christ, overturned neither by the arms of barbarians in the east, nor by the degeneracy of Christians in the west, still maintains itself in vigour and extent; and hereaf-

²⁵ Isai. lx. 3.

²⁶ Phil. ii. 10, 11.

ter, as we believe, with confidence inspired by the visible accomplishment of so many predictions, it will not only fill its old channels—but overflow the whole earth. The fulness of the Gentiles shall croud the courts of our Lord—and the once favoured people of God, released from their long and miserable blindness, shall acknowledge in the humble, patient, crucified JESUS, their triumphant, kingly and glorious MESSIAH!

Thus clearly verified in our Redeemer, was that part of the prophetic text which is immediately before us. When by his expiatory sacrifice, the period of his earthly ministry was closed, and as *the captain of our salvation, he was made perfect by suffering*, the government in Heaven and on earth was placed upon his shoulder—and he was established *on the²⁷ throne which is for ever and ever.*

²⁷ Heb. i. 8.

From the *power* and *regal office*, the Prophet advances to the *personal characters* of the child, whose birth he foretells—and *his name shall be called wonderful Counsellor*! Whether these words should stand as they do in our translation, or whether they should be connected as the *adjunct* and its *subject*, is an unsettled point of very immaterial consequence.—Nor of greater importance is the trifling variation of meaning assigned to the word which is translated *wonderful*. With either sense, by itself, or associated with *Counsellor*, it imports something extraordinary and great; and is strictly in its place, when adapted to the Messiahs of Christian belief.

He shall be wonderful!—and surely HE, whose ministry, death and resurrection, are recorded by the Evangelists, was supremely wonderful!—exposed to all the innocent weaknesses of humanity—yet, Lord of Nature, and invested with almighty

mighty power!—able to command ²⁸ the Host of Heaven, yet submitting to the insults and cruelty of man!—condescending to taste of death, only that he might assert his sovereignty over that offspring and punishment of sin!—now hanging destitute of aid upon the cross—and now rising in victory from the grave, and *leading* ²⁹ *captivity captive*!

He shall be of secret and superior dignity!—and so surely was *the holy* ³⁰ *Child Jesus*!—When presented in the temple, by parents, whose indigence could bring only the poorest offering admitted by the law,—he was acknowledged for *the salvation of the Lord; the light of the* ³¹ *Gentiles, the glory of Israel*! Placed in a low rank of society, and the inhabitant of an obscure village, no sooner has he entered on his Ministry, than the attention, not of Judea alone, but of *all the region round about*, is violently excited.—*Fear comes*

²⁸ Matt. xxvi. 53.

³⁰ Acts iv. 27.

²⁹ Ephe. iv. 8.

³¹ Luke ii. 30, 31, 32:

upon

upon ³¹ *all*; and the rumour is every where loud, that a *great Prophet was risen up, and that God had visited his people.* Shall we, then, with the Nazarenes exclaim, *Is not this the carpenter's son?—Whence hath he* ³³ *this wisdom, and these mighty works?* Or shall we not rather ask with the wondering Samaritan—*Is not this* ³⁴ *the Christ?*

Yes.—To his countrymen we might say—this man, by the humility of whose condition you are offended, is that mighty Saviour who *was to redeem Israel*:—and his dignity is not only superior to the promise of his outward circumstances, but more exalted even than that of the Messiah, for whom you so impatiently wait! Your predicted Deliverer of the family of David was to resemble ³⁵ your great legislator Moses; but this Man, bearing that resemblance in his prophetic and mediatorial characters, is elevated far

³² Luke vii. 16, 17.

³⁴ John iv. 29.

³³ Matt. xiii. 55.

³⁵ Deut. xviii. 15.

above the dispenser of your law. His power is not only more splendid; but more immediately *his own*. To give him the command, and to supply him with the assistance, the ORACULOR GLORY does not descend. He operates by the DIVINITY OF HIS NATURE—and it is the GOD resident in him who calms the tempest, casts out devils, explores the dark windings of human thought; bids the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk—the dead to arise.

The Messiah whom you expect was to be king and conqueror, priest and prophet.—But this man shall be raised high above the loftiest flight of worldly power;—his conquests shall extend over those spiritual enemies of our nature—the malignity of Sin, and the terrors of the grave;—to make atonement for his people, *he shall enter by his ³⁶ own blood into the holy place*—there in the immediate court of God

³⁶ Heb. ix. 12.

to officiate as an everlasting priest;—and his communication with the MOST HIGH is far more direct and perfect than that of the prophets—for *he is the only ³⁷ begotten Son WHO IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER;—THE COUNSELLOR* who, intimate with all the purposes of eternal wisdom, justice, and mercy—comes to reveal to us *the ³⁸ mystery which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God!*

With this explication, the words which we have been considering are strongly characteristical of our blessed Lord. He was indeed *wonderful Counsellor*;—and, as the Prophet, rising in his language and conception, next announces him,—the MIGHTY GOD!—a sublime, awful title! but, in the appropriation of it to the *Man CHRIST JESUS*, all the writers of the New Testament, Evangelists and Apostles, unanimously concur.

³⁷ John i. 18.

³⁸ Ephes. iii. 9.

Through-

Throughout the inspired volume, we find our Lord invested with the higher pre-eminencies of Divinity;—proposed as the just ³⁹ object of religious worship;—assuming power as Lord ⁴⁰ even of the Sabbath—that immediate institution of the Supreme. Asserting a god-like independence in ⁴¹ the disposal of himself; declaring that he had ⁴² life in himself, and as the fountain of life, could communicate it to others; and claiming to be ⁴³ honoured by all men, as they honoured the Father, with whom (in counsels at least and attributes) he was ⁴⁴ one. On a particular occasion, we hear his name invoked in ⁴⁵ the solemnity of an oath; and every where we see him variously distinguished as the word, who in ⁴⁶ the beginning was with God, who was God, and by whom all things were made. As Lord over ⁴⁷ all,—both

³⁹ Matt. xxviii. 17. Luke xxiv. 52. John xx. 8.

⁴⁰ Luke vi. 5. ⁴¹ John x. 18.

⁴² John v. 26. ⁴³ John v. 23.

⁴⁴ John x. 30. ⁴⁵ Rom. ix. 1.

⁴⁶ John i. 1, 2, 3. ⁴⁷ Rom. x. 12.

dead ⁴⁸ and living. As God ⁴⁹ blessed for-
 ever. As the great ⁵⁰ God, who, divesting
 himself ⁵¹ of his glory, came ⁵² down and
 was ⁵³ manifest in the flesh. As the bright-
 ness ⁵⁴ of the eternal glory, who upholds all
 things by his power. As the king ⁵⁵ of
 kings, and lord of lords—the same yester-
 day, ⁵⁶ to-day, and forever. As he who
 cometh ⁵⁷ in clouds—the first and the last—
 who was, who is, and who is to come, **THE**
ALMIGHTY.

This is only an imperfect sketch of the
 copious evidence supplied by the New
 Testament, for the divinity of (a) the
 Author

⁴⁸ Rom. xiv. 9.

⁴⁹ Rom. ix. 5.

⁵⁰ Tit. ii. 13.

⁵¹ Phil. ii. 7.

⁵² John iii. 13.

⁵³ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁵⁴ Heb. i. 3.

⁵⁵ Rev. xvii. 14.

⁵⁶ Heb. xiii. 8.

⁵⁷ Rev. i. 8.

(a) The reader who is at all acquainted with the So-
 cinian controversy, need not be informed of the de-
 gree of violence necessary to overcome the direct oppo-
 sition of many of the above cited texts to the theology
 of the Socinians. This strange denomination of Chris-
 tians

Author and Finisher of our Faith, who is called, by Jeremiah, the Lord our Righteousness,

tians can indeed support itself only by the most forced and arbitrary, and even contradictory expositions of the Sacred Text. *These*, however, from our long experience of them, have ceased to be the subjects of our surprise. But, we have lately witnessed an attack on some of the articles of Christian belief, unexampled among the followers of Christ; and, for audacity, almost without parallel among the disciples of Socinus. It would perhaps be a work of no great difficulty, to attend the author of *the early opinions concerning Jesus Christ*, in the progress of his disquisition; and, by establishing the concurrence of the Church, since the days of St. John, in the DIVINITY OF JESUS, to overthrow a system which is founded principally on bold assertion. But, the question must *eventually* be decided by the *Scriptures*; and on this ground, with an admission of the authenticity of the sacred canon, we might reasonably assure ourselves of victory. With a *Christian* writer, however, who can charge the great Apostle of the Gentiles with *inconclusive reasoning*, and can sacrifice to his resentment any part of the evangelical history which may have the misfortune to contradict his positions, it would be difficult to engage upon any ground. While I heartily concur with the world, in paying to Dr. P. all the respect due to a be-

teousness; and by Isaiah, in the passage before us, the MIGHTY GOD,

The prophet, in his description of the approaching Saviour of the World, having, by three grand steps, climbed to the loftiest summit of possible greatness, proceeds to some *peculiar eminencies* of dignity, which more accurately determine the glorious object of his vision.—The MIGHTY GOD shall also be the EVER-LASTING FATHER, and the PRINCE OF PEACE!

To the former of these marking characters, different interpretations have been assigned; but, with all its imputed meanings, it clearly belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. For, apprehending its first sense,

benefactor of science, he must forgive me if I lament, that he ever quitted those studies in which he is so well qualified to succeed, and to be useful to his species, for those in which the produce of his labours can be acceptable to none but the enemies of that religion which he professes to venerate,

as it stands in our translation, it will be necessary to recollect, that, in the Sacred Writings, superiors and masters, civil and spiritual, are frequently approached with the venerable address of *Father*—it is given to Naaman ⁵⁹ by his domestics, and to the Prophet Elisha, ⁶⁰ by two successive kings. The relation, likewise, between the instructor and his pupil, is represented by that of *father* and *child*. It is thus that Eli ⁶¹ calls Samuel his *son*, and Elisha ⁶² confers on Elijah the appellation of *father*. It is thus also that St. ⁶³ Paul speaks of himself as the *father* of his Corinthian profelytes; and St. John, in many passages of his epistles, adopting the language ⁶⁴ of his Lord, gives to his disciples the endearing title of *Children*.

In either of these acceptations, therefore, the character of EVERLASTING FATHER is a proper designation of HIM,

⁵⁹ 2 Kings, v. 13.

⁶¹ 1 Sam. iii. 6.

⁶³ 1 Cor. iv. 15.

⁶⁰ 2 Kings, vi. 21, 13, 14.

⁶² 2 Kings, ii. 12.

⁶⁴ John xiii. 33, 21, 5.

who, possessed of that supreme dignity, which we have lately noticed, descended to be the great instructor of man—of HIM who had *the words* ⁶⁵ *of eternal life*; who taught as having ⁶⁶ authority, and by whose ministry and spirit *the earth* ⁶⁷ *was filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*—But a more exact translation of the original would perhaps be *the Father of Eternity*—and the expression will then carry the same meaning with that of *the Author* ⁶⁸ *of Eternal salvation*, applied by the Apostle to JESUS, and justly due to him from whom we derive our claim to immortality;—and *through whom* ⁶⁹ *alone is the gift of God—eternal life,*

Of the passage we are explaining, there is, however, another interpretation, which, supported as it is by the first authorities, must be admitted as agreeing more fully

⁶⁵ John vi. 68,

⁶⁶ Matt. vii. 29.

⁶⁷ Isai. xi. 9.

⁶⁸ Heb. v. 9.

⁶⁹ Rom. vi. 23.

with

with the Prophet's design, in the delineation of the Messiah.

In some very ancient (b) and respectable versions, we find the words in our text, *everlasting Father*, expressed by *the Father of the future age*—and to this expression St. Paul manifestly alludes, when, on two occasions, he calls the Christian state the *world⁷⁰ to come*. The Apostle, indeed, might, at the same time, more remotely allude to other passages in the prophetic writings; for, in *these* we sometimes find the entire revolution which was to follow the abrogation of the Mosaic system; and the new æra in religion and morality to be formed by the establishment of the Gospel kingdom, represented as a species of *creation*—as the formation of *new Heavens⁷¹ and a new earth*. Of this future age or dispensation, which, as it is never

(b) Septua. & Vulg. in the former (at least in some of the best copies of it) the expression is *πατὴρ μελλόντος αἰῶνος*.

⁷⁰ Heb. ii. 5.—vi. 5

⁷¹ Isai. lxy. 17.

to be superceded by any later disclosure of the Divine will, is called *everlasting*, our Lord is properly the FATHER—or the origin, and the head; and over it, as its immediate Author and Lord, he shall preside, *till he hath put all enemies under his feet*.

The Prophet, in his prediction of the Messiah, having before risen from the lower to the higher elevation of rank—from him who was *wonderful and of mysterious dignity*, to the associate of the *eternal counsels*, and the MIGHTY GOD, advances in that part of the text to which we are now come, from the *less to the more perfect discrimination of character*—from the *great Teacher of divine truth*—the Lord of the *new and everlasting covenant*, to that still more eminent distinction, and more appropriate title of the Messiah—**THE PRINCE OF PEACE!**

7^a Rev. xiv. 6.

73 1 Cor. xv. 25.

To

To discern more clearly the peculiar propriety of this designation of our holy Jesus, let us consider his *office*, and the *religion* which he came to establish,

By abolishing the temporary separation between Jew and Gentile, to reconcile those jarring parties; and, by their union, to form a new ⁷⁴ creature, the pure and spiritual worshipper of God, was the *office* of our Lord upon earth.

While the dispensation of the law was determined by the divine wisdom, to be necessary for the more essential interests of religion, the Israelites were the immediate *family* of God; and the other nations, excluded from this peculiar household, were regarded as *aliens* ⁷⁵ and *strangers* ⁷⁶—as those who were far ⁷⁷ off—as not ⁷⁸ a people—nay, from their corrup-

⁷⁴ 2 Cor. v. 17.

⁷⁵ Deut. xiv. 21.

⁷⁶ Exod. xii. 43.

⁷⁷ Isai, lvii. 19.

⁷⁸ Deut. xxxii. 21.

tion and idolatry, sometimes even as enemies⁷⁹.

From this language of their inspired writers, and from a wrong sense of their high and honourable privileges, the Jews wished to exalt their own consequence by the degradation of their Gentile brethren. They considered *themselves* as the sole objects of the divine favour; and arrogantly assumed to confine the great God of the world within the straitened boundary of Judea. For the *descendants of Abraham* were reserved all the advantages of that futurity, which was rather hinted to them than disclosed: and to the *descendants of Abraham*, reigning under their triumphant Messiah, was to belong the *possession of the earth*! These narrow prejudices and vain conceits were followed by worse consequences. Contempt ripened into hostility, and the separated nation, forgetful of the beneficent precepts of their

⁷⁹ *Iſai*, lix. 18.

law, soon began to consider the whole human race as their adversaries—till, at length, they attained to that hatred of their species, with which they are generally reproached by the Pagan writers.

To remove, therefore, this injurious prepossession, to confound this cruel pride, and, by the revelation of an equal God, to appease this unjust and prophane enmity, was peculiarly the office of the *Prince of Peace*!—and this was the office of our Jesus!—with HIM *there was neither Jew nor*⁸⁰ *Greek*. Enlarging the holy Jerusalem, he offered its privileges to all mankind. Those who were *aliens and strangers* he made *fellow-citizens*⁸¹ *with the Saints*. Those *who were afar off*, he brought⁸² *nigh by his blood*—those *who were not a people*, he called to be the people of⁸³ *the most High*—and those *who were enemies* he⁸⁴ *reconciled, and made the ser-*

⁸⁰ Gal. iii. 28.

⁸¹ Ephe. ii. 19.

⁸² Ephe. ii. 13.

⁸³ 1 Pet. ii. 10.

⁸⁴ Rom. v. 10.

vanis ⁸⁵ of the living and true God—thus was he our peace—making both one, and reconciling both to God in one body, by his cross!—and thus is the Father said to have been in CHRIST, reconciling ⁸⁶ the world—inducing peace between man and his brethren, and between man and his God!

But, in his ministry, as the mediator of a covenant, ⁸⁷ established on better promises than the old, our master, Jesus, will appear more distinctly to be the PRINCE OF PEACE. BORN as our INSTRUCTOR, and dying as our REDEEMER, he rose from the grave, and passed into the Heavens, ⁸⁸ to appear as our ADVOCATE and HIGH-PRIEST, in the presence of God, there to mediate between human imperfection and the Divine Holiness:—to make reconciliation ⁸⁹ for the sins of his people; in his golden ⁹⁰ censer to present their prayers before the throne of Grace; and

⁸⁵ 1 Theff. i. 9.

⁸⁷ Heb. ix. 6.

⁸⁹ Heb. ii. 17.

⁸⁶ 2 Cor. v. 19.

⁸⁸ Heb. ix. 24.

⁹⁰ Rev. viii. 3.

when

when the period of their earthly labours is compleated, to effect their everlasting PEACE, and bring them to *that* ⁹¹ *rest*, which, as it was the object of his satisfaction, to obtain for them, continues to be the object of his intercession to secure:—

In the peculiar OFFICE, therefore, of Jesus on earth and in Heaven, we must acknowledge the PRINCE OF PEACE; and if we attend to that religious system which was framed by our Divine Law-giver, we shall be struck with the predominancy of the same bright and heavenly character.

The intire Gospel may be called the PEACE OF GOD; by the road of temporal, it leads to the habitation of eternal peace; *its law is* ⁹² *fulfilled by love*; and its volume is but an extenſion of that generous and pacific precept, *thou* ⁹³ *shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*: listen to him who was sent ⁹⁴ *to heal the broken hearted, and to preach deliverance to the captives*! be mer-

⁹¹ Heb. iv. 1.

⁹² Rom. xiii. 10.

⁹³ Gal. v. 14.

⁹⁴ Luke iv. 18.

ciful, ⁹⁴ love your enemies, do good to them who hate you, bless them who curse you, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest: listen to the eloquent apostle, as, with a heart dilated with the Spirit of Jesus, he talks of that charity ⁹⁵ which suffereth long, and is kind, of that charity which envieth not, of that charity which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things! listen to the same apostle, when he tells his disciples, that the fruit ⁹⁶ of the Christian spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness!—listen, I say, and be certain, that the religion, whose language you hear is the offspring of that wisdom which ⁹⁷ is gentle, and carries impressed on every lineament of her divine countenance the image of the PRINCE OF PEACE!

When the prophets, speaking of the kingdom of the Messiah, dwell with par-

⁹⁴ Luke vi. 36.

⁹⁵ 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

⁹⁶ Gal. v. 22.

⁹⁷ James iii. 17.

ticular fondness and rapture on the universal concord, which is to be the eminent characteristic of that favoured state, their views undoubtedly extend to that glorious and triumphant period of the Christian world, which they every where teach us to expect ; but were not the influence of our holy and benevolent religion, resisted by that depravity of our nature, which neither promises can soften, nor menaces can bend, the allusions of the prophetic language would, even now, be as proper as they are bold ; under the dominion of the Gospel—the conflict of the passions would be over-ruled,—the *loftiness of* ⁹⁸ *man would be bowed down, swords would be beaten into plough-shears, the wolf would dwell with the lamb, and the full harmony of the moral system would hail HIM, whose throne is established* ⁹⁹ *on righteousness—*even JESUS THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

⁹⁸ Isai. ii. 17.

⁹⁹ Isai. xvi. 5.

We have now completed the examination of our text—and we have seen the prediction of human weakness verified in a God; and the promise of Divine Majesty accomplished in a MAN—the MIGHTY GOD—*was born—was given—and became the Father of human salvation—the Prince of human peace!*—Wonders cluster on the subject!—behold, Man, the violator of his Maker's laws;—obnoxious to death, and trembling at the stern sentence which awaits his disobedience!—the being which he so lately received may at this instant be resumed.—Righteous, but awful judgment! To enjoy the privilege of breath—to feel life warm and busy at the heart—to lift the countenance to Heaven—and, with the divinity of intellect to be familiar with the glories of the creation; nay, to converse as his friend with the GREAT CREATOR—and then forever to sink!—to be hurried from this triumph of existence to the dungeon of the grave—to the dull cold slumber of unawakened matter—in fruition and dignity inferior
to

to the worm! But, sad as may be the immediate and entire loss of being, it is not the worst infliction to which the offender is exposed. For a short time he may be allowed the enjoyment of the day—to struggle with infirmity and corruption—to propagate the heirs of his degeneracy—to be hopeless of reward,—yet, possibly to ripen into the object of God's *full* displeasure, and then to possess immortal being, for the sole purpose of eternal punishment!—miserable and tremendous consequence of sin!—But, from such complicated distress—from man fallen—abandoned—ruined, let us turn, and behold where the HEAVENLY SAVIOUR comes to raise—to comfort—to restore.

Moved with pity for a creature, lately the pride of that world, in which all was created good, the DIVINE BENEFICENCE offers himself for an atonement; and, as accomplishing the great purposes of justice, the atonement is accepted by the SUPREME MERCY. The glories of re-

ward are instantly disclosed ;—and renovated man, informed by the open communications, and strengthened by the secret influences of his God, once more rejoices in a life, whose *transient and blended* happiness may terminate in that which is *everlasting and pure*.

The great sacrifice, indeed, by which these blessings are obtained, is wisely delayed—the human understanding thrown from its first eminence by sin, must be reared again by the ripening efficacy of time—and then announced by successive dispensations, and preceded by his herald prophesy—the ONLY ¹⁰⁰ BEGOTTEN OF GOD descends to be made Man—he is born—glorifies his ¹⁰¹ Father upon earth, overcomes ¹⁰² the world, and, by the active obedience of his life, is himself the guide to those regions of eternal joy, which he opens to us by the suffering obedience of his death.

¹⁰⁰ John i. 14.

¹⁰¹ John xvii. 4.

¹⁰² John xvi. 33.

This

This is the scheme of Christian salvation—the last counsel of divine wisdom and goodness, to lead us from depravity to holiness!—Yes, my Brethren—it is the last, and the greatest instance of heavenly favour extended to man!

The Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, while, like the original law of nature, they demanded pure obedience, gave but a distant and doubtful view of the world of recompence—from the intellectual darkness and immaturity which then generally prevailed—they were likewise very limited in their extent—and they proved ineffectual in their operation;—for the former was soon overcast by the grossness of idolatry, and the vital spirit of the latter was quickly extinguished by the vanities of form; but during those dispensations, tho' the *merits of the atonement* were imputed, the *sacrifice* for sin was not as yet offered, the general summons to repentance was not as yet proclaimed, the full code of

human duty was not as yet promulged; *at those times of ignorance, therefore, the¹⁰³ Holy One was pleased to wink*; and though he never could be blind to the *presumption of disorder*, yet, undoubtedly, he accepted the obedience of very imperfect righteousness.

But the difference, my Brethren, of our situation, will not admit a hope of similar indulgence;—the great expiation has ACTUALLY been made;—the call to repentance has rung loudly through the world:—the awful consequences of this life stand manifestly revealed—no darkness hangs over the realm of duty—the requisitions of *law* are softened by the beneficence of *grace*—in our hands is the explicit volume of the divine will; before our eyes is placed a model for our imitation, in the humanity of our Lord; and, on our steps, as our counsel and support, attends the SPIRIT OF GOD! Should we therefore reject the means now offered to us of hap-

¹⁰³ Acts xvii. 30.

pinels, we must remember, that *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin*; no brighter display of motives, no fuller explanation of the divine pleasure, no greater mitigation of righteous law, no stronger assurances of heavenly assistance! Should we, therefore, still resist the Almighty, and refuse *the great salvation* which is gone forth, nothing will remain for us *but a* ¹⁰⁴ *certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation!*—Yes, we must be lost for ever!—we must fall into the hands of the LIVING GOD!—but is it possible, my Brethren, that *we* can thus be lost?—they who perversely will turn aside from a path neither intricate nor rugged—they on whose hardness *the sword* ¹⁰⁵ *of the word* OF GOD loses its edge—they who can despise the glories and the terrors of eternity—they who can be unmoved by the condescension of the GOD, and by the mild perfection of the MAN CHRIST JESUS—must be the proper children of per-

¹⁰⁴ Heb. x. 27. ¹⁰⁵ Rev. xix. 15. Heb. iv. 12.

dition, deaf to the voice of reason, dead to the nobler affections of our nature, without hope, without gratitude, without love! unconscious of the dignity of holiness, and of the sweet attraction of benevolence!—and is it possible, my brethren, that we can class with these disgraces of our name? No, we will at least *shew ourselves* ¹⁰⁶ *to be MEN; encompassed with infirmity; but respecting* ¹⁰⁷ *recompence of reward*, open to the impressions of goodness, capable of meeting and embracing the DIVINE GRACE!

Let us then, Brethren, *partakers* ¹⁰⁸ *of the heavenly calling, consider the Gospel and High-Priest of our profession* CHRIST JESUS! from the humility of his birth, to the ignominy of his death—let us attend him as he walks through this vale of sorrow—accompanied by patience and meekness, by charity to man, and resignation to God! in obedience to the heavenly

¹⁰⁶ Ifai. xlvi. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Heb. xi. 26.

¹⁰⁸ Heb. iii. 1.

mandate, ¹⁰⁹ let us hear this beloved Son, as he invites us *to follow* ¹¹⁰ *and to learn of him*; as he bids us, if we are his friends, to do what he commands us! on the strong wing of faith, let us pursue him from weakness to glory, and behold him seated at the *right hand of the* ¹¹¹ *Majesty in the Heavens*, where for *them who love him he hath promised to* ¹¹² *prepare a place*, and where *them who come unto* ¹¹³ *God by him, he is able to the uttermost to save*,

With this example, these precepts, these promises, these prospects, let us not be affected by the little brightness or obscurity of a life which is so soon to pass away, and of which, in a few years, no wreck will ascertain where the vapour has once played! No, — let the world take *knowledge* ¹¹⁴ *of us as having been with Jesus*; — as educated in the school, and brought up at the feet of our great spiritual Father: as mani-

¹⁰⁹ Matt. xvii. 5.

¹¹⁰ Matt. xi. 29.

¹¹¹ Heb. viii. 1.

¹¹² John xiv. 3.

¹¹³ Heb. vii. 25.

¹¹⁴ Acts iv. 13.

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festing in our conduct some resemblance, though distant of the faultless excellence of HIS life! — then, mindful on whose shoulder the government now rests, we may come boldly to the throne of grace, and for the pardon of our frailties, we may rely on HIS intercession, who in all ^{his} points was tempted as we are—that he might induce our confidence in his compassion—and might thus become our EVERLASTING FATHER, and our PRINCE OF PEACE.

115 Heb. iv. 15

SER-

S E R M O N XII.

On the NECESSITY of CONSTANT
ATTENTION to the RELIGIOUS
IMPROVEMENT of LIFE.

ISAIAH LV. 6.

SEEK YE THE LORD, WHILE HE MAY BE
FOUND;—CALL YE UPON HIM, WHILE HE
IS NEAR!—

WHEN, with the nature and situa-
tion of man, we compare the
conduct of the greater part of his species,
we must be struck with its manifest incon-
sistency—for who are these whom we see
thus wholly plunged in the gross enjoy-
ment

ment of the present?—Is their condition permanent and stable—exempt from evils—from calamities and dangers?—or, Is their existence short, precarious, wretched as it is—to be closed with an ETERNAL SLEEP?—No—their condition, always fluctuating and doubtful, is crowded with evils—exposed to calamities and dangers—and, from the culture or the neglect of their allotment of present duty, their immortal existence must derive its everlasting character!—Where, then, in this littleness and confinement of human aims, can we trace the master-creature of this world—who proudly arrogates the title of *rational*—who was made *in the image,*¹ *and after the likeness of God?*

By exposing this strange deviation from reason, let us endeavour, as far at least as it respects ourselves, to correct it; and, profiting by the detected errors of others, strive to grow *wise unto salvation.*

¹ Gen. i. 26.

² 2 Tim. iii. 15.

That

That man is *a moral and accountable agent*, few are so inconsiderate or so hardy as to dispute. It is a truth directly inferred from the attributes of the Deity, visible in the beauty and contrivance of nature; and from those feelings in our own bosoms, which give us the assurance of a future life, and a day of final judgment. As to the inferences of reason on this subject, revelation adds certainty and force;—there are not many who, at this period, can be blind to those foundation-stones of religion and of ethics—the immortality of the human soul, and a state of retributory justice. *Some*, indeed, will not stoop for the most palpable and bulky truths—and *some* will perversely turn aside from the most obvious and striking. But, of them who are either too gross or too refined for common opinion, the number is so inconsiderable as to be unworthy of notice. The *multitude* distinguish and believe; and it is in their conduct alone that they are infidels and fools. With understandings sufficiently enlightened, they
seem

seem to be unaffected, and at ease in *the land³ of the shadow of death!* Indolence and fatigue subdue them—the toys of immediate interest and pleasure seduce and divert them—the horizon seems to extend almost without limit to their sight;—and, let them loiter or revel in their course, they still fancy, that within the smallest distance from the goal they can qualify themselves for the prize.

But the Christian race is of a more ferocious nature;—and its prize is neither so easily gained, nor so partially bestowed. The plain over which we are to run is of uncertain extent, and the shortest remission of our efforts for victory may be productive of the most dreadful defeat!—in every stage of our career the Lord attends on us—speaks to us—stretches out his hands to assist us! *If we seek him he is nigh—if we call upon him he will hear.*—But, at each step his sovereign appoint-

³ *Isai. ix. 2.*

ment may suspend our course; and then *we may seek him but he will not be nigh, we may call upon him but he will not hear;* instead of the sweet voice of kindness and invitation, we may then be struck with the wounding tones of anger and upbraiding; because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hands and no man regarded; therefore ye shall call upon me, but I will not answer, ye shall seek me early, but ye shall not find me.

Of this wonderful inattention to the most awakening demands of our situation, the causes (as I have already hinted) are the prevalence of passion, a reliance on the duration of life, and a persuasion of the all-sufficiency of repentance; attending in its order, to each of these causes of pernicious error, I shall insist more fully on the *last*.

4 Prov. i. 24, 28.

The

The design of our Heavenly Parent, in blending with our nature, the warmth and vigour of passion, is obviously marked with the characters of supreme wisdom and beneficence;—to preserve the individual, and continue the species—to temper with sweetness the cup of life—to fit us for our present state of various duty—to give energy and extent to our virtues—to supply occasion of moral exercise and trial, is the province which was assigned to passion;—but to restrain this principle of activity to its proper objects, and to say to it, *thus far shalt thou come, and here shall thy proud might be stayed*—the Divine Will establishing reason on the throne, gave her power to exert with effect the prerogative of controul with which it invested her.

When these essential parts of our constitution are maintained in their just stations, and the force of the subject acts in subserviency to the lawful government of the Sovereign, the state of man is in its
highest

highest and most perfect integrity—its harmony is then complete, and its tone strong, but modulated and sweet;—all within it is then temperate, but not languid; energetic, but not violent; a calm without stagnation, and spirit without insurrection;—but seldom is this efficacious, equally long and uniformly preserved; while human resistance shrinks from perpetual effort, the claims of passion are urged with steady importunity; every concession inflames their insolence, and adds to their effect, till, at last, the sedition, no longer to be restrained by the voice of the controuling power, entirely overthrows the balance of our nature; anarchy and miserable disorder soon follow; and to avenge the cause of insulted reason, God deposes his ministers of punishment, conscience and disease.

That wretchedness attends on the excesses of the passions, and happiness on their regulation and order, a glance on human life will not permit us to doubt,

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Let us contemplate that mortifying and dreadful scene! it is the lazar-house (if the expression may be allowed) of licentious passion!—Behold **INTEMPERANCE**, tottering from his debauch, or rising from his fevered sleep! the dull flame of his eyes, his heavy and confused tongue, his fallow and bloated cheek, his shrunk and trembling fibre, tell the dear purchase of his paltry gratifications: Behold **AVARICE**, undelighted amid the sweetest pleatings of social life, dead to the tenderesses of husband, father, son, or brother; intent upon his pernicious wealth, while care and want, hatred and contempt pour their afflictions on his head!—Behold those twin furies, **RAPACIOUSNESS** and **PRODIGALITY**, as they hang over the table of ruin, and on the eventful die, flake fortune, friends, family, reputation! Mark the varied distemper in their faces, now flushed with the riot of exultation, now pale and writhing in the madness of despair! Mark, likewise, the disorder of their intellect, superstitious, though prophane—respecting
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ing the fortune of a card, and blaspheming the HOLINESS OF THEIR GOD!—Behold that fiend, whose hands are embrued in blood; and the fierceness of whose countenance is heightened into horror by a severe and ghastly smile!—that fiend is REVENGE!—behind follow, pride, envy, inordinate desire, and a savage multitude, almost without a name!—See their strange demeanor, their wan and frantic looks! some dejected, some furious, all miserable, and many raising the steel against their own breasts, and aghast under the just terrors of eternal wrath!

From a spectacle so distressful, let us turn to a brighter prospect, and observe the passions acting with their due force, and within their proper limit, subservient to the good of this life, and leading to the happiness of the next: let us remark hope, fear, desire, love of pleasure, prudence, liberality, warmth of temper, emulation, greatness of mind, in alliance with health, cheerfulness, strong and clear in-

tellest, the glow of active virtue, the satisfaction of private and of social duty discharged, in possession of this world :—yet, looking to that more perfect state, in which alone their higher appetites can be completely gratified.

When abandoned, therefore, to trivial indulgencies, we neglect to *call upon the Lord*, let us not accuse the weakness of humanity, nor complain of the overbearing impulse of passion!—let us be certain that we have the power to command this impulse, and that by giving it its proper temper and direction, we shall correspond with the design of our Maker, and essentially advance our own true interests, temporal as well as eternal. To redeem ourselves from the bondage of our lusts, the exertion, indeed, must be vigorous, and probably will be painful; but let us reflect, that delay, while it gives strength to the chains of sin, necessarily increases the painfulness of the exertion which must break them: let us assure ourselves, that
easy

easy as these chains may now seem, they will eventually harass and afflict us; that, success in every step of our progress opening upon us, our contest for liberty will every moment grow lighter; and that our filial victory will be rewarded with the delightful feelings of vanquished servitude, recovered dignity, conscious empire, with the rich blessings of self-gratulation, of the respect of our own species, of the applauses of that *great cloud* ⁵ *of heavenly witnesses*, who behold our labours; of the still voice of GOD HIMSELF, fraught with everlasting comfort to our souls!—it is thus, my beloved! if we *resist* ⁶ *the devil* of our own corruption, *he will fly from us*, and when he leaves us—*Angels* ⁷ *will come and minister unto us*!—let us hasten then, and starting from a slumber, which otherwise must end in death, let us assert the controul of reason over passion, and *seek the Lord, while he may be found*.

⁵ Heb. xii. 1.⁶ James iv. 7.⁷ Matt. iv. 11.

The *prevalence of passion*, however, would neither be so strong, nor attended by such fatal consequences, were we to bring that acknowledged truth sufficiently close to our hearts—that *mortality* is at every instant *liable to dissolution*—but, strange as it may appear, a *reliance on the duration of life* is a second and co-operating cause of erroneous conduct!

The frailty of our present existence has in every age been the favourite topic of moral declamation. The subject has been exhausted by the philosopher and the divine; and the individual experience of man has given force to the admonitions of the *one*, and truth to the reasonings of the *other*. Yet, such is the power of self-deceit to harden and to blind, that admonitions, and reasonings, and experience, have proved equally ineffectual.—Man, without *trusting in the Lord*, can see *thousands falling at his side*, and *ten thousands at his right hand*—and yet be unalarmed!—neither by the arrow which
flieth

*flieth*⁸ by day, nor by the pestilence which walketh in darkneſs, is he terrified; for, with ideot and mad confidence he aſſures himſelf, that *they will not come nigh him!* in youth he looks forward to manhood—in manhood to age; and there is no period of life or of infirmity, beyond which he hesitates to prolong his expectations.

This prepoſterous and infatuated dependence on the future, may indeed be nothing more than the exceſs of an inſtinct, wiſe and benevolent in its deſign. But it is the exceſs only, and the abuſe of this fond anticipation of to-morrow, which it is our duty and our intereſt to correct. If, with the vigilance of good ſervants, *who know not in what hour their Lord*⁹ *may come*, you cultivate *this day of ſalvation*, the moment in which it muſt inevitably cloſe, may without danger, be concealed from your ſight; and thus you

⁸ Pſalm xci. 6.

⁹ Matt. xxiv. 42.

will be exempted from that pang of death which afflicts in apprehension alone.

But, if on this persuasion of extended life, you still linger in the embrace of some fascinating vice. If you say, *the Lord delayeth ¹⁰ his coming*—let us now sport—hereafter we will prepare for him, it becomes the obligation of the Christian and the friend, to dissipate your treacherous security;—to tell you *that the Lord may come in an hour that ye think not of!*—to bid you—not to reason on the precariousness of your existence—but to feel it: to request you not to be tutored by the observation of others, but to be affected with your own; to point your attention to the passing scene, and, as it presents you with the view of all ages and conditions hurried to the grave, to implore you not to reject its melancholy instruction!

¹⁰ Luke xii. 45.

Are

Are you in age, weakness or disease? you are already within the precincts of the tomb!—the hand of death is upon you!—cease to wrong yourself with hope!—be thankful for the warning which is indulged!—and with every nerve of diligence—animated as it is late, prepare to welcome that awful consummation which is to fix your everlasting doom!

Are you healthy, young, and strong? by your temper not addicted to excess; by your situation or profession removed from particular danger? It is well, But dream not of the fourscore years to which the life of man is sometimes extended! Reflect, that the tumult of youth is more exposed to disorder than the tranquillity of age; and that the maladies of the strong, from their superior violence, hasten more rapidly to a fatal termination! Consider the thousand casualties which invade the safest station, and surprise the greatest circumspection! Regard the fearful structure of this body on which
you

you rely!—How infinitely numerous!—how exquisitely fine!—how essentially requisite to existence, are the parts of the complicated machine!—trace the brain from its citadel, the head, as it sallies to the extremities of the system; and, living through millions of branches, sees from the eye, hears in the ear, tastes on the palate, catches sensation over the whole surface of the frame!—Follow the current of life, as from its fountain in the heart it explores its way through the fleshy labyrinth, and, with innumerable rivulets cherishes and sustains the animal œconomy! Survey nature in her secret laboratory, digesting, concocting, refining, subliming—and, by an inscrutable process, converting aliment into chyle, chyle into blood;—blood into brain; brain into nervous fluid!—Contemplate carefully this little world of wonders!—learn that the smallest disarrangement in its minutest part may be the minister of death—and tremble at the danger of your situation!—Yes—*what I say* to age, to
weak-

weakness, to disease—I say to youth, and health, and strength. *Watch!*¹¹—*this night may your*¹² *soul be required of you!* Arrest the hour which is on the wing:—give it to duty! to your neighbour, and your God!—*Seek the Lord, this instant, while he may be found!*—and then—when *ye lie down, ye shall not be afraid;*—yea, *ye*¹³ *shall lie down, and your slumber shall be sweet!*

But, could the duration of life be exactly ascertained—were it never to be interrupted by accident, nor shortened by disease, still, for its last stage, would men reserve the important business of preparation for immortality;—still would they lavish on their corruption the first sprightly running of existence, while to obedience, and reconciliation with God, they would afford only its muddy sediment, and its scanty dregs.—Wherefore, indeed, should they stint themselves in the indul-

¹¹ Mark xiii. 37. ¹² Luke xii. 20. ¹³ Prov. iii. 24.

gencies of sin, if at the last hour those indulgencies can be atoned, and eternal peace be assured by the *all-sufficiency of repentance*?—Let us now then investigate this third source of mortal error; and by ascertaining the ends of our present being, discover the nature of that repentance, which alone can be acceptable to God, and consequently beneficial to us.

What then is man? Reason and revelation declare that he is a creature, fallen from his original purity, who, too corrupt for the justice of God to reward, and too good for his clemency to punish, is placed in this doubtful and middle state, for the great purpose of *moral improvement*. From a large view of this world we must be sensible, either that when it was framed our *immediate* happiness was not the object of the Creator;—or that the power, which in no other circumstance has failed of its effect, grew weary and inefficient when directed to the accommodation of man.

The

The obvious and intrusive wretchedness of our species asks not the illustration of enquiry: whether we regard the moral or the natural system, it forces itself equally upon our sight; and whilst *in one* we are struck with the ravage of the elements, with earthquakes, pestilences and famines—in the other, we are shocked with the deformity of wars, and of persecutions, of fraud and of rapine, of oppression and of slavery; no age, no condition, is exempted from the law which condemns us to the taste of woe; infancy has its pains, youth its disappointments, manhood its toils and its cares; age its imbecillity, its chilness and its fears; whether we look to high or to low, to public or to private life, the view is still saddened with distress,—from the multitude of the miserable,—from the afflicted and the weak, the destitute and the naked: if we turn our observation to the prosperous and the flourishing, the powerful and the wealthy, we still find the boast of happiness contradicted by the sigh of discontent; *artificial*
indi-

indigence supplies the anguish of *real*,—the miseries of others press upon the soul,—the mind is sometimes shaken by the storm of passion, sometimes shaded by the gloom of melancholy, sometimes abused by the fantastic mockery of spleen.

Are we then born only to go weeping to our grave? And is life nothing but a walking and terrific shadow?—No,—gracious God! in thy ways to man, thy righteousness and thy mercy are as conspicuous as thy wisdom and thy power! to the imperfection of our nature, thou didst adapt the world, in which thou hast stationed us; and didst ordain that present and seeming evil should be the parent of future and real good! by our own distresses thou dost repress the tumult of our passions, and inculcate patience, temperance, fortitude, reliance on thy providence, and submission to thy will! by the distresses of others, thou dost open every source of finer emotion in our souls; and, as with thy still breath, awaken in us the flame
of

of benevolence, the bright contempt of the *selfish*, and the ardent preference of the *social*!—in thy hand affliction and blessing, like storm and sun-shine, avail to break, purify, meliorate, fertilize, and call forth the rudiments of such fruits as may hereafter be transplanted to thy peculiar kingdom, there to acquire the full maturity of flavour and of growth.

This, my Brethren, is the only scheme, by which the prevailing misery of life can be brought into union with those benign attributes which reason pronounces inseparable from the GREAT FIRST CAUSE; the principal end, therefore, of our present state, must be, the reformation of our corrupt nature, for its vice to substitute virtue, and to induce such habits as may fit us for the participation of a more elevated rank, and a more perfect condition.

As we know, that a pure spirit cannot be pervious to passion, when God is said
to

to *be angry* with us for our sins, we are sensible, that it is only the tongue of condescension speaking to our weakness; but what the *resentment* of God cannot with propriety be said to effect, will be accomplished by his *justice*, and by *the eternal order of things* established by his pleasure; as it is impossible for the darkness of sin ever to mingle with the light of righteousness;—if the sensual and the disorderly *could* obtain the future reward of the virtuous and the just, they would be incapable of enjoying the spiritual blessedness of that Heaven, whose harmony they would violate, and whose purity they would affront;—our reason, therefore, assures us, that if we are desirous of associating, hereafter, with the righteous, and of being admitted to the diviner communication of God, we must contract, by a conviction of its deformity, an habitual detestation of sin, and cultivate with unremitting assiduity, a relish for the charms of goodness.

In

In the page of revelation, we find the moral design of our being authenticated,—and illustrated by the most lively images; human life is a vineyard ¹⁴ planted by the supreme Lord, for the purpose of a prolific return—every branch ¹⁵ which beareth not is taken away; and every plant ¹⁶ which yieldeth not good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. To explain that we are now remote from our proper home; and strongly to express the difficulties which await us, in our struggle with depravity and weakness, our present existence is represented as a ¹⁷ pilgrimage, as a ¹⁸ race, as a contest in some heroic games, as a fierce and uncertain warfare; through various labours we must win our way to our ¹⁹ own city, and then, strive to enter in ²⁰ at the strait gate; if we are ambitious of the crown, we must persevere ²¹ without faint-

¹⁴ Matt. xxi. 33. Isai. v. 1. ¹⁵ John xv. 2.

¹⁶ Matt. vii. 19.

¹⁷ Heb. xi. 13.

¹⁸ 1 Cor. ix. 24. Phil. ii. 16. Heb. xii. 1.

¹⁹ Heb. xiii. 14.

²⁰ Matt. vii. 13.

²¹ Rev. ii. 10.

ing in our course; for though all run, one alone receiveth the prize: as we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with ²² principalities and powers; if we contend for the mastery, we must prepare ourselves by the restraints of the most exact discipline; to resist the fiery darts of the wicked, we must take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, the whole armour of light; and while we thus travel, thus run, thus wrestle, thus accoutred, engage in fight, we are made ²³ a spectacle to angels, we are encompassed with ²⁴ a cloud of witnesses, and when our efforts are finally successful, there is ²⁵ joy in Heaven.

With these views of the object of life, and the labour of accomplishing that object, if we now compare the nature of repentance, we may be able to determine

²² Ephe. vi. 12, 16.

²³ 1 Cor. iv. 9.

²⁴ Heb. xii. 1.

²⁵ Luke xv. 7.

the manner in which its virtue operates, and how far it can extend.

Elevated above the infirmity of passion, it is the correction, not the punishment of sin; the *conversion*, not the *death*²⁶ of the *sinner* that God requires: to those, therefore, who turn from the evil of their ways, and seek him with all their hearts, he promises, that he will pardon what is past, and receive them into favour;—because, by complying with these conditions of grace, by *ceasing to do*²⁷ *evil*, and *learning to do good*, they may still form themselves to a taste of holiness, and thus give the Almighty power (if I may so express it) to provide for their happiness. *That repentance* then which is accompanied by an entire change of habit and constitution, as it restores us to the capacity of fulfilling the first intention of our being, must necessarily be effectual.

But where are we to look for this genuine, powerful, new-creating repentance?

²⁶ Ezek. xviii. 23.

²⁷ Ifai. i. 16.

—In the chamber of sickness, amid the tumult and the various misery of concluding life?—Alas! that melancholy spectacle of departure will furnish the reply! —See, round the bed the pensive servant, the weeping friend, the distracted wife! —see the poor object of their concern—his body harrassed with pain, his mind labouring with conflicting passions, hovering with alarm over that world, which he must soon, and for ever inhabit, and tenacious of that world which he must soon and for ever abandon! Can the prey of such discordant agony address himself properly to his God? In such a turbid moment, can he distinguish and arrange the disorder of his soul?—is the tear which issues the holy drop of penitence—or, is it the flow of disappointed sin, or of apprehensive guilt? Can he at once annihilate that corruption which he has fostered for years? Can he honestly embrace that godliness which he has hitherto despised? Can he love with his whole heart, that God whom he now dreads *as a consuming fire*? Can he, in short, compress the strenuous business

business of a *life* into *an hour*—into an hour like *this*—into an hour of confusion, and pain, and sorrow, and alarm?—Alas! his spirits faint—his eyes close!—if thou hast hope of Heaven—make signal of thy hope!—He dies, and makes no sign.

It is possible, my beloved Brethren, that even an hour may not be granted to our wish of late reconciliation;—accident may intercept the period of sickness—or phrenzy may usurp it! but should a last hour be given to tardy contrition, we now see how likely it is to deceive the infatuation which confides in it.

Some, indeed, have extended to a greater length, the saving virtue of repentance; and ignorant of its nature, have supplied the sinful with a doctrine favourable to their darling procrastination.—But this doctrine is contradicted by the whole tenor of revelation.

Of all the instances produced from the holy scriptures to support the efficacy of

a death-bed repentance, the principal is, that of the malefactor, who was pardoned on the cross;—and the slightest attention to his case will satisfy us, that, standing quite by itself, it is wholly inapplicable to any other individual of the human race:—Let us dwell on it for a moment.

Betrayed by one of his immediate followers—rejected by the people who had lately received him—persecuted by those who, from their superior information, were the best qualified to decide on his pretensions:—the Messiah is condemned to the shameful punishment of crucifixion!—as he hangs *on the accursed tree*—insulted by his enemies, destitute of *human* and of *divine* aid;—when the faith of his disciples, established by a thousand miracles, began to waver—he is acknowledged as THE HOLY ONE OF GOD, and his mercy is implored by a companion of his condemnation! Removed by his life of rapine, from villages and cities, it is probable that the suppliant had never heard the doctrine, nor seen the power
of

of Jesus—he broke no baptismal vow—rejected no repeated offers of mercy—turned not aside from obtrusive information!—but his soul ran eagerly to meet the first dawning of grace!—his conversion, though sudden, was complete!—christianity was already strong and fervid in his heart!—the display of his faith was beyond example eminent!—and he received absolution from *the Son of Man*, who ²⁸ *had power on earth to forgive sins!* Where, then, is the person, in whom such a remarkable coincidence of circumstances can justify, in a similar extremity, the expectation of similar pardon?

Do I then absolutely close the gates of mercy against the expiring sinner;—and banish from his situation hope, that universal solace of human wretchedness?—no—far from me be the presumption to limit the Divine Grace!—it may reach beyond the hope of man!—but in a concern of such awful moment I dare not flatter;—nor *speaking peace* ²⁹ *when my God hath with-*

²⁸ Matt. ix. 6.

²⁹ Jer. vi. 14. Ezek. xiii. 10.

held the promise of peace! the only title to remission of sins, *affixed* to us in the holy writings, is a warm, vital, fruitful *faith*, shooting through every principle, and expanding into righteousness—and how ill adapted to the acquisition of such an efficient and actuating faith, is the season of approaching dissolution; it would be superfluous further to insist—it is possible indeed that we may *believe*—but, it is possible, likewise, that *we may believe* ³⁰ *only that we may tremble!*—That folly, in short, which, with the chances powerfully in its disfavour, should stake fortune and life against the rattle of a child, would be reason itself to that madness—which, for a few pleasures—unsatisfactory in possession, and reproachful in consequence, can hazard, on the unlikely prevalency of death-bed sorrow—the stupendous object of ETERNAL HAPPINESS!

What must ³¹ *I do to be saved?*—was the question of the trembling goaler to his holy prisoners. To every serious man,

³⁰ James ii. 19.

³¹ Acts xvi. 30.

reflect-

reflecting on the importance of a life, which opens into the awful magnificence of eternity—the same question will naturally occur.

What must I do to be saved?—Apply to reason and religion for the right conduct of the PASSIONS!—respect these powerful energies as useful servants; but dread them as imperious Lords; and controul their extravagance, which not only leads to future danger, but must be attended with present pain.

What must I do to be saved?—Dwell with earnest meditation on the frail nature of HUMAN LIFE! Be feelingly convinced, that *the little spark* ³² *in the moving of the heart* may at any instant be extinguished!—Be ashamed of reposing on the lightness of a ³³ *vapour*, which every breath of accident may disperse!—grow familiar with anticipated death!—and, if that stern advocate of righteousness and temperance should make you tremble,—

³² Wisd. ii. 2.

³³ James iv. 14.

say not unto him—*go thy way this ³⁴ time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee!*

What must I do to be saved?—Let it be always present to your mind, and fastened on your heart, that the sole object for which you were born is PROGRESSIVE VIRTUE!—that every hour has its charge of duty and improvement!—that, at the judgment-seat of Christ, each moment will raise its small voice to urge your condemnation, or to plead for your acquittal! Redeem, ³⁵ therefore, the time which is so short! ³⁶ Walk while the light is ³⁷ with you!—for close behind cometh that night in ³⁸ which no man can work!—sleepest thou in the lethargy of sin?—Awake! ³⁹—Art thou dead to the demands of thy being?—Arise!—thy Saviour bids thee, and he will yet give thee life!

Are these admonitions unnecessary?—Are you thus master of yourself?—thus

³⁴ Acts xxiv. 25.

³⁵ Ephe. v. 16.

³⁶ 1 Corin. vii. 29.

³⁷ John xii. 35.

³⁸ John ix. 4.

³⁹ Ephe. v. 14.

fenfible of the infecurity of life?—thus frugal of your little day?—thus emulous of improvement? thus intent on meeting the wifhes of your God?—thus independent on the uncertain morrow? I congratulate you!—human nature is not fufceptible of greater happinefs than that which you poffefs; nor of higher elevation than that which you have attained! Perfevere! Remit not your generous efforts! prefs ftill forward! *My 49 falvation, faith the Lord, is near to come, and my righteousnefs to be revealed.*

But can we, indeed, my Brethren, eftablifh our claim to this exalted character, and call this glorious congratulation our own? Before we retire to our beds, when we examine the moral hiftory of the day,—has no defilement been contracted? Has every fally of paffion been repelled? Has fome imperfection of our nature been corrected; fome good propenfity encouraged and enlarged? Has an hour been loft; and, jealous of *Pagan virtue*, do

we weep over it with unaffected sorrow? Have we learnt to be more *absent from the body, and present with Christ*? Do we find the sanctuary of our bosoms furnished like the *holiest* of the Lord; and can we say, with honest exultation—*surely God is in ⁴¹ this place.*

But *the heart is ⁴² deceitful.* To bring, therefore, our integrity and conscience to a surer test, lo, God himself hath *descended with ⁴³ the voice of the Archangel, and with ten thousands ⁴⁴ of his saints!* The earth and the heavens are passed away! The dead and the living stand before their Judge! Creation is awed into stillness! Even the tongue of seraphic harmony is suspended, and *there is ⁴⁵ silence in Heaven!* The books of fate are opened! in one is written every wickedness which the mind could entertain, the tongue utter, the hand fashion into deed! *In the other,* every accepted offer of grace, every sigh of genuine penitence, every triumph

⁴¹ Gen. xxviii. 16. ⁴² Jer. xvii. 9. ⁴³ 1 Thes. iv. 16.

⁴⁴ Jude — 14. ⁴⁵ Rev. viii. 1.

of prevailing virtue, every effort of expansive charity, every flight of ascending love! Eternity hangs on the recording page! *The righteous scarcely* ⁴⁶ *can be saved!* What then is our condition?—Bending under guilt? or solicitous only for human imperfection?—confounded in thy presence, O merciful God? or raised to confidence by thy promises; and saying—*thou didst give us five talents, behold here are ten? We fought Thee when thou wast to be found, and we called upon thee when thou wast near?* ⁴⁷

This, my Brethren, is the most certain trial to which we can bring the sincerity of the heart—with life and death placed thus immediately before us;—if it should still pronounce in our favour, we may safely *rejoice in the strength of our salvation*: but, struck with the momentous crisis, should our bosom counsellor be induced to falter, let us be alarmed, and with instant zeal apply ourselves to obtain its more decisive approbation.

⁴⁶ 1 Pet. iv. 18.

⁴⁷ Matt. xxv. 15.

Nor let the imaginary remoteness of this universal judgment diminish the persuasive eloquence of its terror. At what period soever it may be appointed by the wisdom of the Supreme, *in truth*, my Brethren, it cannot be remote. *To each of us the Lord ⁴⁸ is at hand*; and the revolution of a few seasons will bring us all to our account!

Whether the soul, in a state of separation from the body, retain its consciousness, as some passages in the Holy Scriptures seem to demonstrate; or whether it sleep till it be awakened, by the summons of the Archangel, the effect, as it respects us, will be nearly alike. On the *former* supposition, to the disembodied soul, subsisting in a new mode of existence, and not calculating duration by the measures of time, *a thousand*, or ten thousand years, will probably be *as one day*; and *that day* also will be coloured with the dark or bright anticipation of the final

⁴⁸ Phil. iv. 5.

sentence with which it is to conclude.—
On the *latter* supposition—in the deep slumber of the grave, duration, not marked by any series of ideas, must necessarily be annihilated; the eyes which closed on the bed of sickness will *immediately* open at the tribunal of Christ: and the day of death, and that of judgment, though, in the interval, the earth may circle, for millions of ages round the sun, will to us be *identically the same*.

O consider this, ye ⁴⁹ that forget God; and be awakened to a quick sense of the danger which presses on you so closely! Call upon the Lord, and he will yet hear you! His goodness still ⁵⁰ leadeth you to repentance; turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of ⁵¹ Hosts, and I will yet turn unto you!

Let us, my beloved, who have not been unmindful of our God.—in conscious weakness supplicate for a blessing on our endeavours to climb, with regular and unwearied foot, the scale of Holiness; till

⁴⁹ Psalm l. 22.

⁵⁰ Rom. ii. 4.

⁵¹ Zech. i. 3.

we reach the limit of our mortal toils! if we earnestly *seek our* HEAVENLY FATHER, he will assuredly discover himself *to be near*, and will grant us the blessing which we implore! while we climb, his angels will descend ⁵² to our assistance—and, at the time ordained by HIM, THE ⁵³ BLESSED AND ONLY POTENTATE, yielding to the intercession of HIS SON, these spiritual ministers will raise us in their arms to the higher steps of this MYSTERIOUS SCALE, which, reaching to the Heaven of Heavens, is bound to the EVERLASTING THRONE! there we *shall rest forever* ⁵⁴ *from our labours*! And there, in the Society of the just, we shall at length experience in ourselves, and behold in others, that PERFECTION, WHICH, ON EARTH, WAS THE REMOTE, BUT GLORIOUS AND ENCOURAGING OBJECT OF OUR INEFFECTUAL PURSUIT!

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⁵² Gen. xxviii. ⁵³ 1 Tim. vi. 15. ⁵⁴ Rev. xiv. 13.

THE END.

ERRATA.

- PAGE. LINE.
- 3 5—for *Nations* read *Nation*.
- 5 20—for *as well as the just* read *as well as OF the just*.
- 20 6—for *course* read *coarse*.
- 26 11—for *he was no more* read *he was TO BE no more*.
- 32 9—for *under* read *from*.
- 37 6—for *have love to one another* read *have love one to another*.
- 64 3—dele *only*.
- 121 4 of the note—for *afflict* read *affect*.
- 125 5—for *and death* read *and THE death*.
- 164 19—for *wa'st* read *wast*.
- 166 9—for *and save them* read *and TO save them*.
- 194 2—after *spake* read *when*, and after *Heaven* dele ;
- 195 6—for *in a discourse* read *in a FORMER discourse*.
- 201 the last—for *their planets* read *THE planets*
- 203 7—for *and perpetuate* read *and TO perpetuate*.
- 222 19—for *their understanding* read *THE understanding*.
- 20—for *their virtue* read *THE virtue*.
- 223 15—dele *and*
- 224 13—for *greatest* read *great*.
- 236 11—for *object* read *objects*.
- 243 18—for *the zealous* read *THIS zealous*.
- 258 17—for *nations* read *Nations*.
- 260 7—after *traced* for , substitute .
- 267 13—after *silent* for , substitute . and after *man* place ,
- 270 19—for *of other nations* read *of THE other nations*.
- 271 16—for *since re-obedience* read *sincere obedience*.

ERRATA.

PAGE. LINE.

- 273 16—for *Divine perfection* read *Divine perfections*.
 300 6—after *iron* for *substitute*.
 8—after *Providence* for *put*.
 306 17—for *contrasted* read *opposed*.
 309 17—for *charity* read *chastity*.
 311 5—dele *to him*.
 312 4—after *virtues* for *substitute* ;
 319 3—for *friends* read *fiends*.
 320 7—for *issues* read *issue*.
 323 15—after *fornication* place a .
 17—for *writ* read *rite*.
 344 16—for *of this nature* read *of HIS nature*.
 345 4—after *perfect* place a .
 348 7—for *lend* read *bend*.
 353 5—for *pagentry* read *pageantry*.
 366 7—after *nature* place a .
 273 11—for *solitude* read *solicitude*.
 the last—for *follow* read *follows*.
 374 14—after *frame* place . and after *pleasure* dele ;
 394 7—for *favour* read *flavour*.
 402 11—for *Messiahs* read *Messias*.
 403 18—for *Messiahs* read *Messias*.
 408 1—for *Messiahs* read *Messiah*.
 440 10—for *respecting recompense* read *respecting*
 THE recompense.
 15—for *consider the Gospel* read *consider the*
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 441 16—for *wreck* read *rack*.
 444 19—for *repects* read *respects*.
 449 8—for *this efficacious, equally* read *this effica-*
 cious equality.
 453 6—for *filial victory*, read *final victory*.
 477 15—after *heart* place a . and after *us* in the
 next line for ; substitute ,

